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James Joyce

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IN Mr. T. S. Eliot's latest volume of prose, *After Strange Gods*, there are several sentences that have been turning over in memory all through my recent reading, rather re-reading, of Joyce, and have given point to my reflections. More than once Mr. Eliot and I had fallen out in conversation over that portentous author, and perhaps my reaction to these comments has a little the note of repentance, since the inability of the printed page to retort invites a degree of assent which it would be humiliating to accord to the same ideas in the heat of controversy. I refer to such statements as that Joyce's works are charged with Christian sentiment and that he is the most "orthodox" of the moderns. More particularly I have in mind the comparison of two short stories respectively by Katherine Mansfield and D. H. Lawrence with the final scene of *Dubliners* by Joyce. All three tales deal with virtually the same situation, Miss Mansfield's *Bliss* with the disillusion of a wife about her relations with her husband, Lawrence's *The Shadow in the Rose Garden* and *The Dead* of Joyce with the similar disillusion of a husband. Mr. Eliot's thesis is the difference of ethical implication.

In *Bliss* he finds no hint of any perception in the author's mind of the moral issue of good and evil involved in such an awakening; in Lawrence besides such amoralism he discovers a strain of sheer alarming cruelty; whereas the disillusioned husband in Joyce has a sudden revealing glimpse of that innocent love, spiritualized by the sentiment of Christian tradition, which a long-dead boy had lavished upon his wife when a girl, and which he himself had so completely missed in his coarser physical possession:

> Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes. He had never felt like that himself towards any woman, but he knew that such a feeling must be love. . . . His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead.

And Mr. Eliot is, I now see, right. By nature Joyce was a moralist endowed with that penetration into the secret issues of life which can scarcely exist without a keen sense of religious values; and he was, indeed is, an artist gifted with genius, nothing less, for the subtleties of style. So much I am forced to admit. My fault was that, annoyed by the obliquities of his latest manner, I judged his work as a whole without historical discrimination. Now my dilemma is to explain by what experience of life and by what theories of art a man capable, when barely more than a youth, of writing the last scene of *The Dead*, should have been brought to wallow in the moral slough of *Ulysses* and to posture through the linguistic impertinences of *Work in Progress.*

The answer to that question must be sought in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which followed the collection of short stories in the *Dubliners*, and under the name of Stephen Dedalus gives a thinly disguised account of Joyce's own preparation for the career of literature. It is a work of mixed value. A good deal of the conversation of the group of students surrounding Stephen is still to me cheaply sordid and irritatingly disjointed; but for the most part the book justifies Mr. Eliot's praise of the author as one permeated with Catholic sentiment, and it contains passages of really exquisite prose. For the latter I need only mention the famous picture of the bathing girl (p. 199 of the edition in the Modern Library), beyond which few writers of English have gone in conveying the glamour of human flesh untainted by lust.

But behind these glimpses of haunting grace, mingled, it must be admitted, with scenes of satyr-like ugliness, runs the story of Stephen's conversion from religion to art. The boy is brought up in a family devoutly Catholic and intensely Irish; and in a sense Joyce himself, though he has rebelled against the restrictions of both, has never lost the stamp they set upon his soul. Now it is to be noted that the religious atmosphere enveloping his formative years was mediaeval to a degree hard for one moulded by other ideas to comprehend. Such a survival from the dead past was indeed not without aesthetic appeal to the imagination, but it was shot through with materialistic magic carried straight down from the Darkest Ages. It calls for a faith capable of creating saints, but it offers little support – certainly so, as presented by Joyce; I am not at all criticising Roman Catholicism itself – for the sober integrities of daily conduct, and provides little power to resist the corrosions of modern rationalism. And we must note also that his Ireland was of the sordid, down-at-the-heels sort which puts away the unliked obligations of life with a jest and has furnished too easy a target for caricature. What the *Portrait* gives us, then, is the story of one who is escaping from the demands of a religion compounded of mediaevalism and patriotism into the alluring liberty of pure art. Stephen is educated by Jesuits and is expected to become a priest. A vein of subtle psychology runs through his earlier analyses of religious experience, showing us that we are not far from the *Dubliners*; but even here there is already something, I will not say of insincerity, but of sentimental religiosity. What really enthralls him is a luxury of emotion, Christian in its conviction of sin and vision of purity, which yet fails of conversion into character. His temptation is primarily of the imagination. The supernatural element of an inherited ritualism dissolves more and more, as we proceed, into the thin vapours of the body. And so, in that scene of morning revery as he lies in bed (p. 259 ff.), we are not surprised to find recollections of the confessional and radiant images of the eucharist melting into dreams of the flesh:

> Her nakedness yielded to him, radiant, warm odorous and lavish limbed, enfolded him like a shining cloud, enfolded him like water with a liquid life: and like a cloud of vapour or like waters circumfluent in space the liquid letters of speech, symbols of the element of mystery, flowed forth over his brain.

So far it is not so much a matter of formal disbelief as of spiritual lapse. The actual conversion to intellectual doubt, the second temptation, seems to have been brought about by a series of sermons on the four "last things": death, judgement, heaven, hell. In part the tragic effect on the sensitive hearer was produced by the Jesuit preacher's insistence on evil as a disease eating into the very substance of the soul, but in greater part by his presentation of the future life of the damned in terms of materialistic horror brought straight out of the Dark Ages. Upon Stephen the first impression was purely emotional: "The faint glimmer of fear became a terror of spirit as the hoarse voice of the preacher blew death into his soul. He suffered its agony." I do not know how far these sermons, which make the centre of the book and are reported with extraordinary vividness, are authentic, and how far a dramatization of what was going on slowly in the author's mind. In either case they show, I think, how the shock of frightful threats out of the other-world acted to tear religion and art asunder. There could be no comfortable coalescence of religious symbols, however devoid of spiritual authority, with kindred vapours of the flesh until the dogmas of faith were rejected categorically by the intellect. Only so could the imagination be freed of responsibility to any power save its own untrammelled creativity.

And to these negative influences were added others of a more positive sort. There was the author's pure delight in the charm of language. He is haunted by a chance phrase: "A day of dappled seaborne clouds." He meditates on the power of words to convey the flowing scenery of the outer world; and from this turns to their more intimate connection with the flood of thoughts and images passing spontaneously through his own soul: "He drew less pleasure from the reflection of the glowing sensible world through the prism of a language manycoloured and richly storied than from the contemplation of an inner world of individual emotions mirrored perfectly in a lucid supple periodic prose." And then follows that vision of the bathing girl, so exquisitely recorded, with its promise that in art he should indeed discover a sphere for the imagination, where rhythm and beauty may be pursued for their own sweet sake, freed from any such external demand upon the conscience as had driven him from religion. Stephen's reflections on this ideal of art, in conversation with a fellow student, are mixed with half-digested scraps from the aesthetic theories of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas and show that disjointed sort of erudition always dear to his vanity; but in the main they are sound enough.

And so, at the close of the book, in a sentence from Stephen's diary which has perhaps been more admired than anything else from Joyce's pen, we have the artist's viaticum: "Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." Into that noble purpose, as it appears, have been converted the religion and nationalism which had held him in bondage. Art has set him free. And the result is *Ulysses.*

II

Now in what I have to say about that extraordinary book, I would first of all acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. Stuart Gilbert's analytical commentary, which seems to me, however I may disagree with its animating purpose, one of the most helpful and intelligent guides I have ever read to a difficult piece of literature. In chapter after chapter it brings out meanings and intentions which I should have missed in my impatient perusal, but which I find authenticated by reference to the original. And it has behind it the authority of Joyce himself, "to whose assistance and encouragement", as the writer avows, his "work owes whatever of merit it may possess". To those who find *Ulysses* impossible reading yet would know what it is all about, I recommend Mr. Gilbert's volume as an easy and fairly adequate substitute.

In brief, *Ulysses* is the story of a single day in the life of one Leopold Bloom, a Jewish canvasser of advertisements in Dublin, beginning with his preparation of early breakfast for his wife in bed, following him through the city in his wanderings and occasional transactions of business, bringing him back home late at night, and ending with the half-awake and chiefly erotic musings of his wife as she lies again in bed. Crossing this journey of Odysseus-Bloom runs the divagation of Stephen Dedalus, the hero of the earlier *Portrait*, now a school-teacher and writer, who has left the house of his natural father, a pitiable example of Irish fecklessness, as Joyce sees his beloved countrymen, and is in search of a true father in the spirit, *i.e.*, Bloom. That is the thread of the narrative; but it is entangled, lost here to reappear there, in the chance meetings of a host of other vagabonds, whose talk for the most part is in the language of the gutter. And all this takes place in the labyrinth of Dublin streets and houses, a kind of reeling kaleidoscope of fragmentary images which might with some justice be regarded as the true theme of the book.

The narrative, if such it may be called, is divided into eighteen sections, the first three of which are introductory, and deal with the setting-forth of Telemachus-Dedalus in search of a father, and his meeting with a Nestor and a Proteus. Follows the body of the story of Bloom in twelve episodes, which bear some resemblance to the adventures of Odysseus with Calypso, the Lotus-eaters, Hades, Aeolus (a newspaper office), the Lestrygonians, etc., etc. The conclusion is again divided into three sections: Eumaeus (Bloom's rescue of Stephen in a drunken brawl), Ithaca (Bloom's return with Stephen to his home), and Penelope (Mrs. Bloom's neurotic reverie in bed).

It may appear far-fetched to describe Bloom's successive adventures in Dublin as an *Odyssey*, and indeed the relation to Homer's tale is often indicated, at least for the casual reader, by such stray allusions as the disgusting table-manners of the diners in a restaurant, which may recall the filthy feeding of the Lestrygonians; or the first words of the Citizen in the Cyclops episode, who is telling how "I was . . . at the corner of Arbour hill there and be damned but a bloody sweep came along and he near drove his gear into my eye". More characteristic of this artificial association, and indeed of Joyce's method generally, is the Wandering Rocks. This is but a brief incident in Homer, as it stands in Worseley's translation:

. . . there wild rocks upswell
Vast, overshadowing, round whose bases cry

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Dark Amphitrite's billows. Gods on high
These rocks call Wanderers; and no wingèd thing
That place hath passed, or can pass, harmless by.

In *Ulysses* there is motion aplenty, and to spare, and in this particular episode the meetings of person with person jump about from street to street and from shop to shop in a manner to bewilder even a hardened reader. But what the Rocks of Homer have to do with all this, it is not easy to guess – beyond the epithet "wandering". If any classical analogy is to be sought for such a maelstrom of incidents, the connecting thread of which can be known only to the author, if to him, it would be with the dance of the Lucretian atoms in the void. It is true that the name of Nausicaa can be attached with a little more propriety to the episode of the three girls on the beach. But even here it is to be observed that the opening scene, if decent, is flat and commonplace (flat and commonplace because decent, one is tempted to say), with no vestige of the charm of Homer's princess sporting with her comrades, that the shy attraction of Nausicaa to the romantically appearing hero is utterly debased in the following pornographic account of Gerty's wiles to seduce Bloom (suddenly revealed like Odysseus from his concealment), and that the meditations of Odysseus are hideously caricatured by the debauched soliloquy of Bloom when finally he is left alone. In one section only is the spirit of Homer's allegory preserved, the Circe. Bloom is determined to watch over Stephen who, in the preceding episode, had gone out staggering drunk from an orgy in Burke's public-house. To quote Mr. Gilbert's summary:

It is a misty night after the downpour and Mr. Bloom loses sight of Stephen at the entrance to nighttown. He presses on resolutely through the mist, past spectral shadows, drunken harpies, rowdy soldiers, lurching workmen, and finally comes upon Stephen in the house of Mrs. Bella Cohen in Tyrone Street. Stephen and Lynch, in the company of the prostitutes Zoe, Flora, and Kitty, are engaged in a rambling discourse on the philosophy of music; Stephen is strumming "empty fifths" on the brothel piano. Mrs. Bella Cohen demands her fees; Stephen, with fuddled generosity, exceeds the tariff, but Bloom comes to the rescue.

In the phantasmagoric visions of his own former delinquencies that pursue Bloom while searching for his "spiritual son", and in the transformations of the brothel scenes, there is more than a hint of the black magic of lust from which Odysseus saved his comrades in the enchanted island of Circe; but Homer's poetic symbolism springs from a philosophy beyond the ken of the modern imitator.

Apart from this last episode, itself a doubtful exception, to any one who goes through *Ulysses* with the *Odyssey* fresh in mind, *experto crede*, the vaunted parallelism between the two works is thoroughly superficial. Nor can I see any grounds for taking seriously Mr. Louis Golding's theory that the wanderings of the Homeric Odysseus have been converted into "a commentary on the evolution of mankind from its heroic beginnings to its present weary conditions".* There are to be sure a few allusions to the ancient civilization of Ireland and other odd bits of antiquarian lore scattered about; there is, for one reader at least, abundant weariness in the life of Joyce's Dublin, which may, if one chooses, be contrasted with the heroism of ancient Greece; but of historic evolution, such as Mr. Golding imagines, I see nothing. And I should hate to believe that three thousand years have brought to mankind only weariness and ugliness from which no escape is possible save in a weary and ugly art.

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* *James Joyce's Ulysses*, p. 95.

III

The evolution that interests the critic is of another and less grandiose kind. We have seen the nationalism and Christian sentiment of the *Dubliners* slipping over in the *Portrait* to a theory of irresponsible art, of art for art's sake, with its goal set upon producing pure beauty and upon forging out of the reality of experience the uncreated conscience of the artist's people; and now we see the execution of this ideal in the prodigy of *Ulysses.* I do not overlook the fact that there are dispersed fragments in the later book of such rhythmic beauty as gave charm to parts of the *Portrait* before the theory of pure art was carried fully into practice; but as a whole the realization of art in *Ulysses* is a creation of ugliness, a congeries of ugly pictures expressed in the speech of Dublin's gutters. What has happened? Here, I think, we can eliminate the factor of nationalism, which remains fairly constant from the beginning to the end of Joyce's career; the changing factor is the self-liberation of the artist from the spiritual values and dogmatic authority of tradition, and the consequent forging of "conscience" out of the uncontrolled spontaneity of his individual consciousness. Here in the main Joyce was but following the path from symbolism to "naturism" in France which recently has been so ably expounded by Marcel Raymond in his essay on the movement *De Baudelaire au Surréalisme*, and which, stopping short of superrealism (we are looking for a parallel with *Ulysses*, not with *Work in Progress*), came to a climax in the fiction of Proust. And it may be noted by the way, merely as a curious fact, that the three acknowledged fathers of this general movement are Americans – Poe and Whitman and Henry James.

The point is that the pursuit of art as an abstraction divorced from the responsibilities of life leads to nothing, and idealistic beauty loosed from belief in the higher reality of spiritual ideas is no more than a mist fluttering in the infinite inane. And the imagination of man, his whole soul, craves reality. The artist who sets out to capture that phantom ideal is like a man in a balloon when his moorings are cut. He soars upward and upward until the air about him grows too thin to breathe, and the chill temperature benumbs his blood, and in the great height above the solidities of earth and the comfortable contacts of humanity he is overtaken by an awful dizziness of the void. He deflates the balloon and falls rushing downwards. The aeronaut may land safely on the ground from which he rose. But for the artist there is rarely such a return. In his reactionary search for reality he is precipitated down and down into the depths of his own being, into that vast dark region of the soul below the plain of ordered and rationalized life. Being unable to sink lower he will feel that at last his feet are set on a foundation of facts which he calls the nature of man. His art will be to reproduce in flowing language the vapours that float up unsolicited through the conscious mind from that abyss of the unconscious. Rational selection and spiritual authority have been repudiated, and the only law governing the flux is the so-called association of ideas, the fact that one image by some chance similarity evokes another, and one sensation fades into another. In this way the artist who sets out to forge the "conscience" of his people ends in identifying this with the so-called "stream of consciousness" into which his own soul has been dissolved. Why it should be so may perhaps be beyond our comprehension, but the truth remains that sheer ugliness and morbid perversions prevail in this stream from the bottom of man's being. With Proust this meant that the ultimate reality of human experience is reached in the horrors of sadism and masochism. In *Ulysses*, perhaps owing to the hangover from a more religious training, perhaps to other causes, these vices are not conspicuous; but the root of ugliness is there and constantly recurring hints of sexual abnormality of another, if less cruel, sort.

Now the result of this spontaneous association of ideas may appear in either one of two forms. It may produce such spasmodic imagery as we saw in the episodes of The Wandering Rocks and Circe and indeed in the greater part of *Ulysses*, or it may flow continuously from image to image, and from memory to memory, and from desire to desire, as in the final episode where Mrs. Bloom's dreaming meditations are written out in page after page without punctuation. For the reader, who would trace the law of association governing the stream, this is hard going, indeed a harder book to read than *Ulysses* you will scarcely find, unless it be Joyce's own later fragments of *Work in Progress*, or some of the *surréaliste* vagaries which emanate from the same school of naturalistic art gone mad.

Why then do our fiercer "intellectuals" devote to the study of *Ulysses*, as in fact some of them do, an amount of study which they would disdain to apply to Plato or Aristotle or the Bible? I believe that two causes are here at work. For the first there is a prodigious amount of sheer intellection behind *Ulysses*. This attempt to give expression to the stream of consciousness is not the outcome of haphazard writing, but is the product of a brain busily engaged in detecting and utilizing the association of ideas directing the flow. Such brain-work is not the creative power of a mind choosing out of the given mass of upsurging ideas those that can be formed into a noble pattern of life, but an intense concentration upon the currents and counter-currents, the sudden novelties and the repeated successions, just as these emerge into the light. And there is the inborn mastery of language to clothe in appropriate words each emergent image or situation as it is seen. The mere range of Joyce's vocabulary devoted to the expression of the undercurrents of life has an almost inexhaustible attraction for the student of literary technique. For myself I have the impression that in this exploitation of the subconscious spontaneity of association Joyce displays a penetration and intelligence far greater than that which made Proust famous, whether this be due to his earlier training in religious psychology or to native genius. And the reader who will bestow upon *Ulysses* the time and concentration required for comprehending the procedure of the author's mind has all the supercilious excitement of detection.

The pleasure is there and real to pick up if you care enough for that sort of thing; but its nature may be, and by the devotees of Joyce commonly is, mistaken. It is not, in itself, the joy of art. I do not mean to sever art as a pure abstraction from other activities of the mind; but I would insist that the difficulty of grasping the ideas of great literature involves an elevation of the will and the emotions in which this detective pursuit of difficulties plays a very subordinate rôle. That is certainly true of the *Odyssey* as compared with *Ulysses*. Nor is the excitement of unravelling Joyce's method the same as that which may accompany the mastery of an artist who is also a great scholar. There is indeed a certain display of erudition in the composition of *Ulysses*; but it is of a disorganized sort, tags out of St. Thomas and Aristotle dispersed among floating allusions to very modern theories of psychology and aesthetics, with no comprehension of any one of the great systems of thought and no sense of the concatenated tradition of philosophy. Mr. Gilbert makes much of the Oriental, particularly the Hindu, element in *Ulysses*; but if this be examined it will appear to rest on the uncritical reading of such charlatans as Mme. Blavatsky and Mr. Sinnett – facile references to transmigration and nirvana and the growing soul-ego, which can only bring a smile to any one who has drunk deeply of the genuine springs of Orientalism. They remind me of an incident of my own youth. I had got the first volume of *Isis Unveiled* from the local library, but inquiry after inquiry for the second volume always brought from the girl at the desk, a friend of mine, the reply that it was out. At last, seeing and admiring my eagerness, she broke the rules of the library, and kept the book hidden for me when next it was turned in. And so I was able to finish that masterpiece of theosophy. "And what did you think of the book?" she asked when I brought back the second volume. – "It interested me," I answered, "but annoyed me too because I couldn't make out what it was all about." – "Oh," said she, leaning over the desk and speaking in a mysterious whisper, "you are not supposed to understand it!"

No, the pleasure of the intellect that infatuates the ordinary partisan of *Ulysses* has little to do with thought in the larger sense of the word. It is the vanity of guessing why one incident succeeds another, where to the casual reader the connection seems purely arbitrary; or it is the satisfaction of grasping quickly that "Blmstup" is a humpty-dumpty compression for "Bloom stood up", or that "monstruosity" is short-hand for "monstrosity-abstrusity" (this I love), or of filling out the innumerable examples of aposiopesis, or of guessing the sense of a phrase or sentence which is perfectly blank until one goes back to it after pages of patient reading. To illustrate this last point I may quote the opening lines of The Sirens:

> Bronze by gold heard the hoofirons, steelyringing.
> Imperthnthn thnthnthn.
> Chips, picking chips off rocky thumbnail, chips.
> Horrid! And gold flushed more.

A husky fifenote blew.
Blew. Blue bloom is on the
Gold pinnacled hair.

And so on and on and on. Mr. Gilbert admits that these pages are "almost meaningless" (why the "almost"?) until the reader has pursued the chapter to the end. But he regards the whole thing as a supreme achievement of " 'atonement' between subject-matter and form":

> This episode differs from most examples of "musical prose" in that the meaning does not lose but is, rather, intensified by the combination of the two arts; sense is not sacrificed to sound but the two are so harmonized that, unless his ears, like the Achaeans', are sealed with wax against the spell, the reader, hearkening to "the voice sweet as the honeycomb and having joy thereof, will go on his way the wiser".

To me, as I suspect it will be to most readers, the notion that wisdom is to be got out of all this mystification looks like an act of artistic faith beyond anything required by the mysteries of religion. But I admit that, if you like that sort of thing and have nothing else to think about, the puzzle of getting sense out of apparent nonsense may have its reward.

If this were all one might dismiss the champions of *Ulysses* as mere cranks, endowed with a restless brain and cursed with nothing to think about – and such there are, I am sure, among the sanctified band. But there is something else. The book has another attraction arising out of its *forense* (if I may make a feeble addition to the Joycean lingo), to explain which an exposition must be added of Joyce's, and his admirers', aesthetic philosophy. In a notable passage of the *Portrait* a sharp distinction is drawn between what the author describes as the "kinetic" and the "static" aim of art, terms which he connects with Aristotle's famous definition of tragedy in the *Poetics*, and which are so important for his practice as well as his theory that I must quote his argument at some length. Stephen Dedalus, the embryonic artist of the *Portrait* and the spokesman there and in *Ulysses* for the author himself, is talking with a fellow student named Lynch:

> —Pity is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatsoever is grave and constant in human sufferings and unites it with the human sufferer. Terror is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatsoever is grave and constant in human sufferings and unites it with the secret cause.—
>
> —Repeat—said Lynch.
>
> Stephen repeated the definition slowly . . . .
>
> —The tragic emotion, in fact, is a face looking two ways, towards terror and towards pity, both of which are phases of it. You see I use the word *arrest*. I mean that the tragic emotion is static. Or rather the dramatic emotion is. The feelings excited by improper art are kinetic, desire or loathing. Desire urges us to possess, to go to something; loathing urges us to abandon, to go from something. The arts which excite them, pornographical or didactic, are therefore improper arts. The esthetic emotion (I used the general term) is therefore static. The mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing.—

Now so taken, with the right qualifications, this distinction between kinetic and static is, I hold, sound and fundamental. The moment literature aims to move, to be kinetic of, the *physical* sense of desire and loathing — to rouse the lustful passions, to produce horror of the nerves (as for example the actual nausea of altitude stirred by the fall of Frollo in Victor Hugo's *Nôtre Dame*), to effect bodily shrinking from the loathsome (as in much of the post-War literature) — that moment, whatever its excuse as propaganda, it ceases to be art, or becomes bad art, which is the same thing. And Joyce goes on to connect this thesis with his conception of rhythm and beauty:

> — Beauty expressed by the artist cannot awaken in us an emotion which is kinetic or a sensation which is purely physical. It awakens, or ought to awaken, or induces, or ought to induce, an esthetic stasis, an ideal pity or an ideal terror, a stasis called forth, prolonged and at last dissolved by what I call the rhythm of beauty. —

That, in its first intention, I believe, is a noble theory of art, nobly stated, and if carried out with Joyce's native endowment of genius, might have enriched literature with a masterpiece of beauty. But upon this theory there is superimposed another view of art which has led to confusion of ideas in the *Portrait* and to worse confusion of execution in *Ulysses*. According to this superimposed theory, derived not at all from Aristotle or from classical practice but from romantic naturalism, stasis acquires an independent meaning of its own, beyond the mere opposition to the wrong sort of kinesis. Static art should not only refrain from exciting the physical sensations of desire and loathing, it should not merely avoid immorality, but should aim to be neither immoral nor moral by maintaining the complete "indifference of nature" towards what is seen, and by reproducing the facts of nature with a realism that eschews any attempt at interpretation. So it is that the romantic notion of art for art's sake, set loose from any responsibility to the authority of spiritual law and traditional inhibitions, merges into a naturalism which rejects from reality all but the physical and in the end all but the ugly.

Now this romantic-naturalistic theory of art which Mr. Gilbert has developed with much acumen in the first chapter of his commentary, does give a veracious account of what such writers as Proust and Joyce have sought to accomplish and to a degree have accomplished. But to designate this accomplishment as "realism" – if by that one means that such artists have represented the bare facts, and all the facts, of life without selective interpretation – is to fall into gross misunderstanding that borders on stark nonsense; it even gives to stasis a meaning utterly inconsistent with Joyce's own use of the word as formally distinguished from kinesis. The simple truth is that all literature, except perhaps the humblest and least pretentious kind of fiction, is interpretative, and as such is kinetic, in so far as it is creative. Homer was not only interpreting, but more or less purposely reshaping, the earlier Greek notions of life and religion. Virgil was consciously, for a purpose, interpreting the facts of Roman history. And there is no need to pursue this argument down through the names of Dante and Cervantes and Shakespeare and Milton and Racine and Voltaire and Goethe. What I would enforce is the point that Joyce's *Ulysses* is not at all the sort of realism which he and his critic Gilbert take it to be, but is in the fullest measure an interpretation of what the world and life are in accordance with a particular philosophy of life and under the sway of a particular philosophy of reality, that he worked out this interpretation with extraordinary industry and cunning, that his claim to a place in the higher region of literature depends not on a supposed realism but on his interpretation of reality, and that it is assent to the highly kinetic philosophy underlying this interpretation which enthrals most at least of his rather simple-minded devotees and explains their zestful expenditure of labour in the obscurely intricate details of its exposition.

To bring these conclusions back to the theory of art expounded by Joyce in the *Portrait*, I should say that the initial error there was one of terminology. He would have formulated his principles more correctly if, instead of a contrast between kinetic and static, he had distinguished between art that aims to arouse physical lust or loathing and art that seeks to move desire and joy of hyperphysical realities; for all art, so far as it is alive, must be kinetic. And then, by identifying stasis with naturalistic "realism", he has rendered his art kinetic in precisely the sense he started out to avoid.

IV

Now the naturalistic philosophy behind Joyce's art is in itself simple enough, and indeed is already obvious in what has been said of his psychology, being nothing more than a theory of objective reality which will correspond to the inner stream of consciousness. As that view of the soul was attained by liberating the ego from any spiritual authority not itself, and from any selective law of reason within itself, so the field of visible phenomena and of physical events, amid which the soul plays its part, shall be freed from the governance of any transcendent power and from any principle of order within itself. To the irrational association of ideas shall correspond a conception of nature as an accidental succession of emergencies, and the irresponsibility of conscience shall be the mirror of a world which merely is what it is.

And what of the theoretical distinction of kinetic and static art when put to the test of reality so conceived? Some light, I think, will be shed upon this question by the "monumental decision of the United States district court rendered December 6, 1933, by Hon. John M. Woolsey, lifting the ban on *Ulysses*", which is prefixed to the American edition of the book. Judge Woolsey's decree is based on literary and moral grounds. For the first he sees clearly enough the artistic method of the work:

> Joyce has attempted – it seems to me with astonishing success – to show how the screen of consciousness with its ever-shifting kaleidoscopic impressions carries, as it were on a plastic palimpsest, not only what is in the focus of each man's observation of the actual things about him, but also in a penumbral zone residua of past impressions, some recent and some drawn up by association from the domain of the subconscious. He shows how each of these impressions affects the life and behaviour of the character which he is describing.

And the judge's ethical acquittal is given in the belief that the execution of this method, though "in many places it seems to" him "to be disgusting", is neither "pornographic" nor "obscene".

Now we may grant that *Ulysses* as a whole is not pornographic, if by that term we mean an intent "to stir the sex impulses or to lead to sexually impure and lustful thoughts". To this extent the book is not kinetic in the Joycean conception, though for myself I cannot see how certain isolated passages, as for example Gerty's seductive wiles in the Nausicaa episode already referred to, can be relieved of such an imputation. But the case stands otherwise if we consider the word "obscene". Judge Woolsey seems to make no distinction between pornography and obscenity, and indeed the above given definition of pornography is cited by him from an earlier legal decision in regard to the obscene. But however it may be in law, are the words actually synonymous? Is not obscenity a more general term signifying what is foul, what excites disgust? And if Judge Woolsey is right in holding that the book in many places is disgusting, then, by Joyce's own definition of kinetic as that which moves the reader to loathing as well as to lust, is not the art of *Ulysses* on this side kinetic, rather than static, and so bad art?

I do not see how, by the author's own definition, his work can escape this condemnation; indeed, in detail after detail, he would seem to have gone out of his way to introduce the note of obscenity with the direct aim of exciting disgust of the loathsome. We have seen how in the Lestrygonians he exhausts all his resources to describe the bare act of eating in a manner almost to produce physical nausea. But the climax of this intention comes in the Hades episode, where the unclean circumstances of death are gloated over with a horrible fascination suggestive of the sort of nightmare that might haunt the sleep of one who, by the favour of a knowing undertaker, has gazed upon what ordinarily is hidden from the eye. And then the graveyard:

> An obese grey rat toddled along the side of the crypt, moving the pebbles. An old stager: greatgrandfather: he knows the ropes. The grey alive crushed itself in under the plinth, wiggling itself in under it. Good hidingplace for treasure. . . .

There is worse than that, much worse; things that the normal human mind would never imagine and that it would be a pollution to quote.

But these details of tumescent filth are only symptoms of an inwardly corroding disease. The realism, of which Joyce's admirers make so much, springs from a belief, not the less devastating because perfectly arbitrary, that reality must be sought in what lies below the surface of appearances, what lies above having been expunged as a delusion of authority. The living man as a vehicle of the soul is not a real thing, but only the putrid corpse; the body as it appears to the eye is not a real thing, but to know its reality you must strip it of its integument and fumble in its entrails. And this identification of realism with the under side of nature is the almost inevitable companion of an atheistic philosophy that dissolves the universe into a Protean flux of meaningless change. The bottom of things, the darkness from which the sun is excluded, is verminous. As Mr. Gilbert says of a scene in the Scylla and Charybdis,

> . . . we feel a tensity of cerebration that is almost pain in Stephen's dialectical progress towards a paradoxical conclusion, the *cul de sac* of a mystery. On that mystery the book *Ulysses*, all religion and every explanation of the universe is founded—"upon the void. Upon incertitude, upon unlikelihood". This spirit of incertitude is materialized in the Circe episode, where phantoms of the "feast of pure reason"—Shakespeare among them—gesticulate mechanically, inane puppets, in a *danse macabre.*

Whether this philosophy of the inane, where ugliness breeds spontaneously, is a consequence of a psychology which dissolves conscience into the stream of consciousness, or whether the genetic order is the reverse, I should not care to say. In either case obscenity becomes a kind of substitute for the ideals of religion, a despotic faith in the horror of utter disorder behind the illusion of decency and stability. There is thus no reason to be surprised at the strange inverted reminiscences of Joyce's early Catholicism that come here and there to the surface of his naturalism.

The book opens with a mocking intonation of the *Introibo ad altare Dei*, and the preface to any particularly polluted incident is likely to be some other tag from the liturgy of the Church. Hints of the eucharist abound, the climax of the blasphemous parody coming at the wildest moment of the brothel scene, when a Black Mass is celebrated, with antiphonal voices of the Damned and the Blessed and the sacred words are read backwards: "Htengier Tnetopinmo Dog Drol eht rof, Aiulella!"

It is this religion *à rebours* in *Ulysses*, this faith in the final reality of nature as something so loathsome that man is relieved of the burden of loyalty to any authority outside himself, and is left to revel in his own sense of superiority – it is this, behind the joy of "a tensity of cerebration", I would assert, that fascinates a certain type of modernist – above all the vanity of the illusion of irresponsibility.

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To Mr. Eliot the bitter realization of obscenity in Joyce – and there is bitterness beneath his rollicking audacity – gives to his work the note of religious "orthodoxy" based on the conviction of sin. To me, I will confess, this spectacle of a great genius expending itself on the propagation of irresponsibility, while the fabric of society is shaken to its foundation, brings rather dismay and sadness. With Mr. Eliot I disagree reluctantly, since at bottom we are, I trust and believe, in accord; but there are those, the "emancipated", with whom the issue is of another sort.

Here I will for once fling caution to the winds and speak out what I feel, though it subject me to the retort of ribald laughter. In this art I see at work not the conviction of sin, but the ultimate principle of evil invoked as the very enemy of truth. And I fortify, or rationalize, my instinctive revulsion by what I hold would be the judgement of philosophy and theology. For the first, what else is this exploitation of the subconscious but an attempt to reduce the world and the life of man back to the abysmal chaos out of which, as Plato taught, God created the actual cosmos by the imposition of law and reason upon the primaeval stuff of chance and disorder. And for the second I would appeal to no formal treatise of theology but to one of the "ghost" stories in Monsignor R. H. Benson's *Mirror of Shalott*, which has haunted my imagination all through the reading of Joyce.

I refer to the tale in which Father Girdlestone relates the three assaults of the devil to capture his soul. Now what first impressed me in that ghostly narration was the order in which the author arranged these temptations, seeming to begin with the most radical and to end with the least radical. And this apparently inverted climax puzzled me until I saw how curiously it corresponds with the actual progress of Joyce from the *Portrait* to *Ulysses*. In Benson's fiction the first temptation is "completely in the transcendent sphere"; it is an intrusion of the evil one into the priest's spiritual dreams, "as when one's imagination is full of some remembered melody and a real sound breaks upon it"; it is a questioning of the validity of all religious experience as something unreal and devoid of authority. Then follows a more open and direct attack upon the reason. "It was intellectual doubt of the whole thing. . . . After all, . . . where is the proof? What shadow of a proof is there that the whole thing is not a dream? If there were objective proof, how could any man doubt? If there is not objective proof, what reason have you to trust in religion at all?" And the priest adds: "A heavy deposit had been left upon my understanding. I did not dare to sit down and argue; I did not dare to run for refuge to the Silence of God. I was driven out into the sole thing that was left — the world of sense."

So far we are moving parallel with what we have seen to have been the two steps in the emancipation of Stephen in the *Portrait*. And then, carrying us over to the execution of art in *Ulysses*, comes the third and deadliest assault. In the priest's story this is described as the insurgence of evil from its last and most secret lair, a voice crying to him that even the world of sense is an illusion, a whirling of shadows in the void beneath which the only reality is some horror of loathing. It is as if the solid objects about him, the very furniture of the room, where his religious life had passed, were "striving to hold themselves in material being under the stress of some enormous destructive force". At times they seemed to him "to have gone, simply to have dissolved into nothingness, as a breath fades on a window — to retain but a phantom of themselves". And it was known to him that what was intended was to merge the world of sense into the very essence of evil:

> I understood at this moment, as never before, how that process consummates itself. It begins, as mine did, with the carrying of the inner life by storm that may come about by deliberate acquiescence in sin — I should suppose that it always does in some degree. Then the intellect is attacked — it may only be in one point — a "delusion" it is called; and with many persons regarded only as eccentric the process goes no further. But when the triumph is complete, the world of sense too is lost — and the man raves. I knew at that time for absolute fact that this is the process. The "delusions" of the mad are not non-existent — they are glimpses, horrible or foul or fantastic, of that strange world that we take so quietly

for granted, that at this moment and at every moment is perpetually about us—foaming out its waters in lust or violence or mad irresponsible blasphemy against the Most High.

That would be the report of theology on the art of the obscene, and if it seems to a certain type of reader purely arbitrary to apply such a criterion to the work of Joyce, let me recall to him the words of Stephen in the *Portrait*: "I imagine that there is a malevolent reality behind those things I say I fear."

The Old Joiner's Shop

William Everett Cram

My joiner's shop is very much like others on farms up here in this northeast corner of the United States. The shed, fifty feet long, connects house and barn and is divided into four sections: the woodshed next the kitchen; then the shop, the carriage house, and the pigsty, the latter no longer in use for that purpose. The shop has its work bench three feet wide and waist high, built against the partition which separates shop and carriage house where carriage, buggy, and sleigh are still in place. Nailed along this partition are strips of one-by-two-inch pine with slots of different sizes cut into them where hand tools of all kinds are hung, and higher up are hardwood pegs on which hang six hand-saws, twelve augers, the old frau for splitting shingles out of bull pine chunks; the tin shears, harness punch, hack saw, and wrenches and the draw shaves and spoke shaves; along with any number of old discarded hub rings, whiffletree hooks and irons, horse-shoes and loops of wire and hoop-iron, any one of which may come in handy in the day's work tomorrow or week after next. On one end of the bench are the fore planes, finishing planes, and matching planes, and on the other the anvil and vise for gripping and holding firm in place wood, iron, or anything else that is to be rasped, sawed, or filed. The chest which holds the bitstock, bits, and drills is halfway between the two. All the remainder of the bench is covered ten inches deep with boxes of screws, bolts, lag screws, lag pins, and washers, and all around and beneath these boxes, a nameless medley of scrap iron, wires, worn out files, and broken tools. Beneath the bench are odds and ends of sawed-off planks and boards and two-by-fours to be sorted over and used as the occasion demands.

In referring at the beginning of this article to my joiner's shop as similar to others hereabouts, I really did not mean to imply that all were like mine as regards the clutter and overabundance of unused and broken tools and other odds and ends mixed ankle deep on the work bench. I could name quite a list of joiner's shops right here in my own town where every hand tool or other implement is always in its own particular place and the work bench itself is at all times clean and free of everything except that on which the work is being done at that particular time.

Against the other three sides of my shop are hanging on their hardwood pegs, ox-bows and cow-bows, whiffletrees, stouter irons, tires, runner irons, and clevises for ox and horse sleds, farm wagons, harrows, ploughs, cultivators, horse rakes, and drags. Underneath these are leaning against the walls short cuts of boards and planks, while overhead are ranged from one cross-beam to another twelve- and sixteen-foot lumber sawed from pine, hemlock, and oak, cut in previous winters in pasture and woodland. Grindstone, saw horse, and joiner's horse have their place in the middle of the floor; the axes (including the broadaxe with which my grandfather hewed old-growth timber into eight- and ten-inch beams twelve, sixteen, and twenty feet in length as straight and true as ever saw-mill cut them). Bucksaws, four-foot saws and crosscut saws are hung against the wall of the walk alongside the woodshed, with crow-bars, cant hooks, pick-axes, and levers leaning against the wall under them.

For the unemployed workman, who leaves the city determined to make a living on an abandoned farm, the question of meeting the expense of acquiring all these necessary tools is no easy one to answer, but in choosing his farm it would be well to look carefully about the joiner's shop for any one of the whole list of hand tools which may have been left there by the former occupant, and never to discard one of them as worthless because of age or rust or knicked and dull cutting edge. Those old forgotten implements will be found almost invariably to be made of steel far superior to any that can be purchased today at the hardware store. Of the hand saws in my shop and which I now use day after day, only one has been bought in my time and very much the same is true of augers, planes, and chisels; and of these more recently gotten hand tools, not one has proved equal in power of holding a keen cutting edge to those left over from my grandfather's day.

Until I was of mature years I always used the same draw-shave that he had worked with for a century or more; then I bought a guaranteed draw-shave (or draw-knife as it is now called) and used it for several years, after which it failed to hold its cutting edge, so I ground down the old one and whetted it to razor edge and found that it cut much better than did the more recently purchased one when it was new; now for the last thirty-five years I have used the old one, while the other hangs rusting on its peg.

I recall when as a boy accompanying my father and grandfather to the salt meadows and while helping them (as I fully believed I was doing) to level up and fix in place against the tide the wooden-runnered sled on which the salt hay was to be stacked, I discovered a long-shanked one-inch auger that must have lain there in the tide-washed stubble for a season or more. Covered as it was with rust we took it home and filed and sandpapered it as good as new; its finely tempered steel came out shining like silver and today it can be counted on to bore its way down through pine or hardwood as well as the best of them. These old fashioned augers, varying in calibre from one-half up to two inches, are awkward and clumsy for the professional carpenter to carry about when going to work away from home, as compared to bitstock and bits close packed in their chest; but for work in the joiner's shop or anywhere on the farm, they will be found as practical and handy as bits and bitstock are, even though in pine and other soft wood they do not work so fast. In my youth I read with keen interest an article written by Dr. Sanborn, whose farm was a mile from my home. This article was entitled "In the Old Pod Auger Days". I only wish that I knew where to find a copy of the paper it was published in. The pod auger which he referred to was the only tool for boring holes in wood, before the invention of the twisted-shanked auger and bit (that is if we leave out of consideration the stone- and shell-tipped implements used by the Red Men here), and was of the same dimensions of steel shaft and wooden handle as the augers now hanging in my shop, the shaft being straight and grooved with keen sharp edges up and down, a sharp triangular tooth standing in at an angle at the cutting end.

Evidently the bitstock was invented before the twisted-shanked auger and bit, for in the chest along with the twisted bits and drills are a number of pod bits, some of which must have been here before my day, while others came from the farm of Squire Blake, my grandfather on my mother's side. Of the six chisels, six screw drivers, five cold chisels, five awls, three wood rasps, seven wrenches, et cetera, which are now in my joiner's shop, something like one out of every four came from the Blake farm and only one or two of each were bought in my time; all the others having been in use here for considerably more than half a century. Many of the others were undoubtedly hand wrought, welded and tempered and worked down to cutting edge right here in town long before the day of city foundry and factory or of the steam railway; the work of making them being done either at the village blacksmith shop or in the forge or on the anvil of this or some neighbouring farm. Steel files are the only hand tools which I am able to name as having all been recently purchased.

The broadaxe with which my grandfather hewed beam and timber from old-growth pine logs still has its place here, also the ditching knife used in draining the salt-marsh meadows. The frau hanging against the wall was evidently, judging from its title, an implement of German origin, just possibly in use by the Von Kramms in Hildesheim before my distant ancestor, Hans Von Kramm, with his young frau came across the Channel to England in the fifteenth century.

In the loft overhead is the flax break, which crushed and freed from its outer coating the flax fibre of the home-grown flax to be made into shirts and dresses pre-ordained to wear a lifetime and then to be passed down the line of younger generations.

One of the acts of my younger days which I now regret more than anything else was the breaking up for other uses after its day was passed of the wooden revolver horse rake. Among my earliest memories is that of riding horseback up and down the hay field on summer afternoons, my bare feet resting on the leather traces that trailed behind my steed, and that old revolver rake with its straight inch-square teeth of polished hickory sliding along over the stubble and gathering on the way every spear of hay within its reach. My father walked behind holding the two wooden handles until the rake was full, and then with just the slightest lift caught the sharp teeth-joints into the stubble; whereupon the hind teeth lifted slowly in front of him, turned over forward toward the horse, and, dropping into the new-mown hay, took their turn at raking, to leave behind a windrow that was closer and more evenly laid than ever any later type of rake has succeeded in doing.

The first mowing machines to take the place of hand scythe and sickle were one-wheeled, one-runnered, long-tongued, ox-driven affairs, one man driving the oxen yoked to the wooden tongue while the other walked behind on the off side lifting and canting the cutter bar to follow the lay of the land. Then the horse-drawn mowing machine was invented threescore and ten years ago. My father and uncle, determined to keep step with the rise and forward progress of our rising civilization, bought one of the very first on the market — the Granite State mowing machine, to all intents and purposes the same as those now in use; and on this the driver rode alone, guiding the team and raising and lowering the cutter bar, setting it in and out of gear without help from anyone else, or necessity of climbing down from the iron seat on which he rode. With this purchase there was delivered a monkey-wrench, just as is done today. Yesterday the pump that fills our air-pressure tank got out of order and I was obliged to quit other work in order to fix it; after trying in vain to remove a nut rusted firm in place, and after throwing aside, one after another, half a dozen wrenches, not one of which has been more than ten years in use, I took that ancient one that has done its task for sixty years or more, and it did the work. Its gripping edge is still un-knicked and even-lined and the thread on which the gear turns is as fine-cut as when first made. Except for one season when it was lost overboard and lay in the stubble from fall until spring, this monkey-wrench has lain on the work bench, or in the tool box of the mowing machine, and has done one hundred times the work of all the dozen others on the farm. Some of them were delivered with mowing machine, horse rake, car, or truck, and others bought at good price at the hardware store, and not one of the whole lot has now the unblemished edge of gripping jaws and thread that this old almost prehistoric monkey-wrench still holds to.

The simple fact is that the workmen of those old days designed and tempered, filed and finished off jaws, nut and bolt, thread and wooden handle from start to finish and not unnaturally took keen pleasure in their work and felt the pride of workman and artist alike in doing each little item to perfection. It mattered not so much to them whether the final product of their handicraft was destined to be sold at retail or delivered along with something designed and made by other hands. Nowadays, with specialized workers each doing their own tiny portion of a few hundred or thousand similar products started and completed in an eight-hour day, the pay check at the week's end is the one and only thing that they can be expected to count in recompense for their labour; while the company they work for must figure out whether the reputation of putting products of good quality on the market, or the gain in demand for said product owing to quick wearing out, calling for more of the same, will bring them in the greatest profit.

Alongside the bench in my joiner's shop, there used to stand the joiner's horse; a most useful contrivance for holding in place wood that is to be worked down into axe helves, fork or rake or lever, canthook or spade handles, ox bows or anything else that is to be worked down from the rough wood to the finished product with draw shave, rasp, and plane. I actually believe that it would be worth my time to go to the woodlot tomorrow and make one to take its place. All that I should need to take with me would be my chopping axe and two-inch auger; no nail or screw or bolt or any form of metal would be needed. First I should proceed to fell a straight-stemmed pine, eighteen inches through at the stump, then log off ten feet of the clearest section of the trunk and with hardwood wedges, made right there in the woodland, split the log in half, hew off the rough sapwood edges of one half until it was one foot in width at the butt end and ten inches at the other; smooth down the split side with my axe. The other half of the log will be cut to the same shape but only six inches wide and eight feet long and hewed clean to the heartwood all around.

With these two joists one above another and half a dozen hardwood pins, varying in length from ten inches up to two feet, is constructed a combined saw horse and stool, one end resting on the ground, while the other, on which the joiner sits while at work, is supported on two legs like an old-fashioned milking stool. Down through two openings cut in both joists is hung, swinging on its hardwood pivot, a two-by-four stick three feet long with a four-inch-square head on top and two-foot cross bar at the bottom. When this cross bar is pushed backward with the feet, the head comes forward and down, holding fast in any desirable position whatever the joiner is working on. With the slightest relaxing of his feet, the axe helve, lever, or whatever it is he is making, can be turned over or moved backward or forward to suit his convenience with but a fraction of the loss of time and bother that is required when it is held in a vice.

In the loft above the carriage section of the shed are also parts of a one-time horse-motived grist mill; the one my ancestors used for grinding corn and which then had its place where my tiny grist mill now grinds by electric power. The wooden hopper of my mill is the same one used in those old days. My grist mill in its buzzing hurry keeping pace with the progress of our time, does its work faster, but not one half so well as did the old millstone revolving round and round at its own leisure. A woodcut of the one and a reproduced photograph of the other might well be made to illustrate the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries.

Perchance the old horse, with his head halter hitched to the driving rod, leisurely trudging round and round his circular path, was half asleep and dreaming that he was ever and ever advancing across pasture and meadow to fields of grass and clover, richer by far than any where he had yet found feeding ground; just as we in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early years of this, dreamed happy and contented of the unrestricted and unlimited progress of evolution, referring to *the* stone age, as the may-flies in their joyous springtime flight may be presumed to speak of *the* winter, now passed and gone forever.

If I for one were given the choice between having my next reincarnation occur in a future age of the millstone revolving by horse or water power, and in that of machinery nervously rattling ahead under force of gasoline or electricity, I should most certainly choose the former, but in the matter of the next stone age! Well! I must ask for more time to think it over.

John Strachey, Marx, and the Distributist Ideal

HERBERT AGAR

MR. JOHN STRACHEY has written a useful and praiseworthy book.* Even readers, like myself, who do not like Mr. Strachey's conclusions can be grateful for this book, which gives a simple and accurate account of two of the hardest theories in economics: the theory of the arch-conservative orthodox economists, and the theory of Marx. Mr. Strachey has done a fine piece of teaching. His book is, of course, hard going; it could not give an honest account of these thorny subjects if it were made soft and easy. But anyone willing to take pains can learn from Mr. Strachey what the two schools of economists with the greatest insight believe to be the nature of capitalist crisis.

Mr. Strachey's book, however, has two defects. In the first place, the author is too sure of himself – or rather, he is too sure of his master, Karl Marx. Many times, after giving a lucid exposition of a hard point, after showing how subtle and how searching is the Marxian analysis of capitalism, Mr. Strachey weakens his case by announcing with an air of quiet pride that he has now proved that such-and-such *must* happen. The world is more complicated even than the Marxian analysis. That analysis is one of the triumphs of the modern mind; all of us who seek to know the present state of our society, or to imagine the future, should be grateful for it; but our gratitude ends abruptly when the Marxists, instead of offering us their analysis as a useful tool, try to force it upon us as a doom.

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* THE NATURE OF CAPITALIST CRISIS *by John Strachey* (COVICI-FRIEDE. 416 pp. $3.00).

The second defect of Mr. Strachey's book is more serious: he never takes into account the fact that "capitalism" is a broad term, that it can mean not only the dreadful system he describes but also a more humane organization of economic life. Yet Mr. Strachey's own definition of capitalism is broad enough to include both the good variety and the bad. He writes of "the capitalist system of the private ownership of the means of production, their operation for profit, and of the distribution of the products by exchange". But this phrase, "the private ownership of the means of production", can mean two different things: it can mean that the ownership of the means of production is widely distributed, as in a Jeffersonian state, or it can mean that the ownership is so very private that scarcely anyone partakes of it. In other words, the phrase can apply to the sort of state which would embody the historic American dream, the sort of state which was desired for America by all but one of our fathers; or else it can apply to the economic oligarchy, the concentration of more and more control in fewer and fewer hands, which Hamilton sought to transplant from Great Britain.

By failing to distinguish between the two meanings of a phrase that recurs throughout his discussion, Mr. Strachey has impaired his political conclusions. It is too easy to dispose of capitalism, of the private ownership of the means of production, if only the most vulnerable form of that system is mentioned. The political conclusions in Mr. Strachey's book, however, are only a minor element. The main element is the economic analysis. And the acumen of that analysis is in no way impaired by Mr. Strachey's failure to notice that there can be a humane form of private ownership.

Mr. Strachey prepares the way for his discussion of the arch-conservative economists by considering the naïve optimists who hold that one form or another of inflation will take care of the deficiency in purchasing power that shows itself during every capitalist crisis. Mr. J. A. Hobson is an example of these inflationists. He believes that the reason the capitalist system bogs down from time to time is that purchasing power is distributed so unevenly that a small group at the top has far more purchasing power than it can use, with the result that it saves too much, that it withdraws too much purchasing power from circulation. The result of such withdrawal, according to this group of economists, is that society as a whole has too little money to buy the goods that are being produced — hence the old problem of starvation amid plenty. Mr. Hobson's remedy (and it is the remedy that appears to be favoured by Mr. Charles A. Beard in this country, and by many of our New Dealers) is twofold: first, to minimize saving by redistributing income through taxation of the rich and through a great extension of social services; second, to keep the price level from falling (either as a result of saving or as a result of increased production) by means of a mild but steady expansion of credit. (Professor Irving Fisher calls this "gearing money to production".)

The classic argument against the Hobson theory is to point out that the money which is saved by the men of big income is not saved for the purpose of being thrown away, but for the purpose of being reinvested in capital industries. The result of these new capital investments will be to reduce the costs of production. Therefore, even if the investment, by withdrawing money from circulation, causes a drop in prices, this will not put the whole system out of joint; for the investment also leads to a drop in costs, with the result that costs and prices are still on a level.

As a reply to the various forms of the Hobson too-little-money theory, this seems adequate; nevertheless, the "sound" economists who make this reply are left with the awkward fact that crises do occur, and that when they occur people seem to have too little money to buy the goods available. So the next stage in Mr. Strachey's book is to discuss what the arch-conservatives have to say about this problem. As spokesman for the best of the capitalist economists Mr. Strachey chooses the great Dr. Hayek, whose *Prices and Production* (with a preface by Professor Lionel Robbins of the London School of Economics) was translated into English in 1931. It is the thesis of Dr. Hayek and the conservative school that in times of crisis the capitalist system is suffering from too much money rather than from too little. For Dr. Hayek believes that crises are caused at the point when, in order to hasten the system's recovery from the preceding crisis, the banking system begins to loosen up credit and to lend more money than is being saved.

> This new money [writes Mr. Strachey] need not raise the price level at all. It may merely offset the tendency of the price level to drop. A rise in the price level, however, is popularly supposed to be the indispensable indication of inflation. Thus the financial authorities may be briskly inflating; and yet they may believe with a clear conscience, and the endorsement of many professional economists, that they are doing nothing which even savours of inflation.
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> But what, according to Dr. Hayek, will be the consequences of this subtle form of inflation? . . . The expansion of credit will create enough new money to offset the "sag" in prices due to the existence of savings. But costs will be steadily reduced by the new processes made possible by the savings. Hence profits, which are the differences between costs and prices, will be continually augmented.

This sounds like the capitalist's paradise, yet it has within it a snake of dire mien. For what happens during the early stages of such a period of mild inflation is that the producers' goods department, flush with all the new money there invested, is able to outbid the consumers' goods department for labour, electric power, and similar mobile factors of production. But before long the new money which has been lent to the capitalists who make producers' goods is spent on wages, raw materials, etc., and slowly trickles back into the hands of individual consumers.

> The producers' goods department [writes Mr. Strachey] cannot, as it were, retain its new money: it inevitably trickles through into the consumers' goods department. The new money gives the producers' goods department only a temporary advantage. Before very long it has percolated into the hands of individual con-

sumers, who use it to reinforce the consumers' goods department. The relative advantage of the producers' goods department is lost. The stolen factors of production are pulled back into the consumers' goods department. It is soon a case of pull devil, pull baker, between the two departments. The inflationary possibilities of this situation are obvious. For the struggle between the two departments is conducted by first one and then the other using new money to bid up the price of the factors of production. It begins to be apparent that the upward movement will go on only so long as ever new doses of new money are injected into the system. For once the stream is stopped, the consumers' goods department will soon have got all the new money.

The greatest danger of this situation, according to Dr. Hayek, is that there are relatively few mobile factors of production (such as unskilled labour) which can be stolen back and forth; but when these few mobile factors have been stolen, the vast majority of non-mobile factors are stranded, temporarily useless. Mr. Strachey puts the point as follows:

> New blast furnaces, new machine tools, have been built. But now the shift in demand away from a demand for pig iron, for example, and towards a demand for silk stockings, makes it more profitable to employ the available non-specific, or mobile, factors (the available electric power and unskilled labour, for instance) upon turning out silk stockings instead of pig iron. And so the blast furnaces must be damped and their complement of decidedly "specific", or non-mobile, skilled workers must become unemployed. In other words, a whole quantity of specific, non-mobile factors of production *get stranded* in the producers' goods department.

They are left high and dry, unusable because their necessary complement of non-specific, mobile factors has been drawn away from them by the renewed pulling power of the consumers' goods department. . . .

But, it may be objected, cannot the consumers' goods department's counter-pull be counteracted in some way? Yes: it can be (and usually is) counteracted for a time by the issue to the producers' goods department of still more new money. For if this is done the producers' goods department will be once more enabled to outbid its rival. And experience shows that the recovery and the subsequent boom do go on so long as ever renewed doses of new money are enabling this to happen. *But each dose of new money must be larger than the preceding one.*

The one way to avoid this recurring disaster, according to Dr. Hayek, is never to strengthen the producers' goods department with freshly-created money – never to invest money that has not been genuinely saved. For the essence of saving is that the saver postpones present consumption in order to enjoy increased consumption later. But if the benefit of saving (the increased consumption later) is sought without paying the price of saving (the postponing of consumption for the time being), the result is the disorder pictured by Dr. Hayek, the mounting inflation (which need not be accompanied by mounting costs), the boom, the crash.

Dr. Hayek's analysis leads to the conclusion that the capitalist system, so far from trying to diminish savings, should try to increase them to the highest possible point. For the system should finance its growth out of savings, not out of credit. And it is here that the shadow of Marx first begins to fall across the picture. For if the capitalist system must increase real savings just so far as possible, then the capitalist system must keep profits as high as possible, must keep costs of production as low as possible, must keep wages as close as possible to the subsistence level. If the analyses of the most conservative and the most respected of the capitalist economists are correct, then all the genial dreams of a "high-wage capitalism" go glimmering and we return to the Marxian picture of a system which is required (because of the very conditions of its life, and not because of wickedness or cruelty on the part of the men who run it) to hold labour close to the level of subsistence. "Subsistence" may be defined as that degree of health and strength and education required of the labourer in order that he may be able to make efficient use of the tools which are put into his hands. During the nineteenth century the standard of subsistence rose, for the evolving machines required ever more alert and instructed workmen. Hence the rise in the workman's standard of living, to which so many politicians have pointed with pride. At the present moment the tendency is for the standard of subsistence to decline, as the perfected machines require ever less intelligence, until a point has been reached when a Bombay native can produce as high a quality of cotton goods as the best-trained workman of Lancashire. If, therefore, capitalism in this worst sense of the word were to maintain itself during the twentieth century, we should probably see a decline in the workman's standard of living, to which the politicians would call the minimum of attention.

The capitalist dilemma, as pictured by Marx, now begins to emerge into the foreground. Before discussing that dilemma, it is necessary to refer to the labour theory of value. The Physiocrats of the eighteenth century, and the classical school of economists of the early nineteenth century (whose leading figure was Ricardo), based their thought on the doctrine that value (or rather, exchange-value) was determined by labour. In general, what the classical economists meant was this: first, an article's use-value need bear no relation to its exchange-value. Air has the maximum of use-value; the race would perish without it. Yet air has no exchange-value; nobody pays for it. If human labour were required for the production of air, air would have exchange value. Similarly, the bread-fruit that drops from a tropical tree beside a lounging savage has no exchange-value, though its use-value is high; but the loaf of bread purchased in New York City has exchange-value, though its use-value may be no greater than that of the bread-fruit. The loaf of bread has exchange-value because human labour went into the making of it.

The second point to remember about the labour theory of value is that it only applies to such labour as is socially necessary. Whether or not a given piece of labour is socially necessary may not be revealed until the resulting commodity is put upon the market; but neither Ricardo nor anyone else ever pretended that all labour, no matter how foolishly expended, automatically created exchange-value.

And the third, and most important, point to remember is that when Ricardo spoke of "a man selling his labour" he did not refer to a man standing in the employment-line outside a factory; he referred to a man who had *expended his own labour upon his own means of production* and who offered the resultant commodity for sale. As Mr. Strachey puts it:

> The peasant small-holder, employing no hired labour, was the type of this worker. If society had consisted exclusively of such small-holders each producing, say, one agricultural specialty, the first wheat, the second potatoes, the third fruit, and so on, plus a few independent artisans cobbling their shoes or making their spades, then the labour-theory of value would have been almost self-evident. . . . For a man could only sell, the classical economists maintained, actually completed finished labour which had become embodied into a commodity. Unless we understand that this, and not the, to us, far more familiar and natural conception of a man hiring himself out for pay, is what the classical economists meant by a man selling his labour, we shall never be able to understand either the controversy between them and the post-classical capitalist economists, or Marx's solution of the problem.

The post-classical capitalist economists broke with the labour theory of value because, in a world where the factory system dominated production, this theory no longer seemed to account for the factor of profit; neither did it seem to leave a sufficiently dignified place in the scheme of things for "capital". But Marx did not break with the labour theory of value. He made it more subtle and more comprehensive; he applied it in his new form to the factory system of production; and by so doing he achieved an unrivalled insight into the workings of capitalism in the worst sense of the word.

It was the final disappearance, in nineteenth-century England, of the small owner — the disappearance of the property-system in the old-fashioned American sense, its replacement by a form of ownership in which few men could hope to share — that destroyed the labour theory of value in the simple terms in which the classical economists stated it. Marx restated the theory, in terms applicable to a system of production which was dominated by the factory. The Marxian restatement is well put by Mr. Strachey:

> In their new conditions the mass of mankind could not sell their labour; for they could not get hold of the necessary "means of production", without which they could perform no labour. Landless agricultural workers, artisans for whom it was impossible to acquire the indispensable means of production, could not possibly sell their labour. For before you could sell your labour, in the sense in which the classical economists had always used the phrase, you had to perform it. You had to do the job before you could have a saleable product which could appear on the market as the embodiment of your labour. And workers who had lost their access to the means of production could not do any job. All they could do was to sell their *ability to labour*, their *potential* power to create commodities, to someone who had possession of the means of production. For this latent ability to labour, this potential power to work, could only become actual, kinetic labour, when it was united with the indispensable means of production. And this could only be done by someone who owned these means of production. Hence, Marx insisted, it was essential, if hopeless confusion was to be avoided, to coin some new term to describe this new commodity which a wage-worker sold to a capitalist employer when he entered into a wage contract with that employer. For he did not sell the capitalist his labour. On the contrary, the

wage worker was unable to labour until he had been brought by the capitalist into contact with the means of production. All he could sell to the capitalist was his potential power to labour, or, as Marx called it, his *labour power*. . . .

Thus the real position is that the wage-worker sells his labour power to the capitalist, while the capitalist sells the wage-worker's labour, embodied in the commodity.

It is now clear where the element of profit enters in, according to the Marxian analysis. The difference between the cost of this newly-defined commodity, labour power, and the cost of the commodity which results when this labour power has been applied to the means of production, this difference is profit. According to the labour theory of value itself, *labour power* is merely worth the amount of labour necessary to feed and keep the labourer in reasonable health while he does his work. The price of *labour power*, in other words, is a subsistence level of living. But the price of *labour*, embodied in a commodity, is something else again. The worker produces more value than he uses up. The difference is the Marxian "surplus value". And Marxian "surplus value" is capitalist profit.

The question arises (and here is where Marx splits with most post-Ricardian economists) whether surplus value, in the Marxian sense, is the only source of profit. A naïve view is that business men simply make money by trading among themselves. But the capitalist system as a whole cannot make money in this way. If the system as a whole is to profit, there must be a production of new value. And this new value must be created, either by labour alone as Marx contends, or by labour and by saving (*i.e.*, by foresight and abstinence which go to the creation of new capital). If, however, the surplus value which the foresighted capitalist saves is made up entirely of the difference in value between *labour power* and *labour*, then it remains true that labour is the sole source of new value.

It is now possible to describe the capitalist dilemma, as Marx saw it. But the reader should remember that Marx is thinking only about the form of capitalism which divides society into a very few people who control the means of production and a great many people who have nothing to sell on the market except their labour power. Marx does not consider the form of capitalism which the founding fathers hoped to establish in our country – the form of capitalism under which the majority of families will own a part of the means of production and will therefore be able to sell on the market, not merely their *labour power*, but their *labour* in the Ricardian or Marxian sense (*i.e.*, the commodities resulting when they apply their labour power to their means of production). This latter form of capitalism, which is the historic American effort, I shall henceforth call simple "capitalism". The British or Marxian form, with all its evil consequences, I shall call "finance-capitalism".

In preparing for his statement of the capitalist dilemma, Marx depends chiefly on two theories: the first is the labour theory of value; the second is the theory that in a system of finance-capitalism there is a steady tendency for the rate of profit to fall. A considerable section of *Das Kapital* is given to explaining this second theory. The argument is too complex for brief statement; and in any case the theory scarcely needs to be proved today, for it is accepted by the most conservative of capitalist economists.* On the basis, chiefly, of these two theories Marx erects the following indictment of finance-capitalism:

1. Since, by definition, profit is the motive power for the whole system, and since there is a steady tendency for the rate of profit to drop, and since the profit in finance-capitalist production is the difference between the value produced by labour and the wages paid for the hire of labour power, it will therefore never be possible to maintain a "high-wage capitalism". For if wages are pushed up and up as the productive capacity of the community increases, in order that the community shall have the purchasing power to absorb its own production, the result will be to magnify the rate-of-profit's tendency to drop. And the result of that will be a crisis of alarming size.

2. If, on the other hand, wages are held down to a subsistence level, and if society saves all the profit it can spare and invests this profit in the producers' goods department, it will never be possible to dispose of the resultant production in the domestic market. And a foreign market, in a world where many finance-capitalist nations are reaching the same *impasse* at the same time, can only be won by war and cannot permanently be maintained at all.

Here, then, is the finance-capitalist dilemma, which has been summarized by Mr. Strachey as follows: "*One way of expressing briefly the reason why capitalist crises are inevitable is to say that they come about because it is necessary to minimize the population's purchasing power in order to obtain even a minimal rate of profit on the ever vaster mass of capital used in production, and to maximize their purchasing power in order to be able to sell the products. And you cannot do both.*"

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* Dr. Hayek in *Prices and Production* says "the general theory of interest" leads to the conclusion that – other things remaining the same – profits must grow smaller as the whole production-structure of finance-capitalism grows more complex.

For those who accept the whole system of finance-capitalism there are only two ways in which it is permissible to try to escape from this dilemma. The first way is through a big-scale attempt at "high-wage capitalism". It is still possible to contend we do not *know* that "high-wage capitalism" must fail. In my opinion its fated failure has been proved theoretically and is about to be proved in practice. In my opinion high-wage capitalists are doomed because they are trying to repair a system whose motive power is profit, and the remedy they use is bound to kill that motive power. This, however, is still a matter of opinion – though the Marxists would not admit that qualification. Neither would Dr. Hayek and Professor Lionel Robbins.

The second way to try to escape is through a ruthless application of "low-wage capitalism", through a ruthless holding down of wages to a subsistence level, through a persistent saving of every penny that society can spare and a persistent reinvestment of all those pennies in capital-goods industries. The Marxists hold that this method of escape is doomed to failure. I am inclined to disagree. I am inclined to think that this method might succeed, and that the only thing to be said against it is that it would produce a world in which no decent man would choose to live. Mr. Strachey gives cogent reasons for believing that here we have the economic explanation of fascism, that fascism is the creation of a tyrant state for the sole purpose of enforcing "low-wage capitalism". If so, I should think that fascism might work, if one could imagine a state whose people would endure such indignity. A nation might endure it for a short time, in the name of patriotism and for the pleasure of oppressing non-racial minorities. But would any nation be so abject as to endure it in the long run?

These brief comments on Mr. Strachey's argument may explain why he comes to the following conclusion: "We are compelled to face the fact that only two futures are possible for such remaining capitalist democracies as France, Britain, and America. Either the rate of profit must once again be restored, by any methods and at any price in human suffering and social degradation, or revolutionary working-class movements must expropriate the capitalists and organize profitless production for use. It is the purpose of fascism to effect the first alternative, as it is the purpose of communism to effect the second."

Mr. Strachey reaches this clear and simple conclusion by ignoring a third way out. Perhaps it is no wonder that he does this, for Mr. Strachey is an Englishman, and England has turned her back on the third way out ever since the seventeenth century. But it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the United States was founded in order to find the third way out. It was the purpose of our fathers, and it is the content of the American dream, to create a capitalist society (*i.e.*, a society based on the private ownership of the means of production, and their operation for profit) in which labour gets its just reward. And labour cannot get its just reward, under capitalism, except in a society where a majority of labourers have a share in the means of production. In such a society the average man, the average family, sells labour in the Ricardian sense. The "surplus value" produced by the labourer goes to the man who produced it. The vast majority of men and women are not held down to a subsistence standard of living. And the lucky few at the top are not wracked and ruined by periodic crises.

Marx thought he was writing a book to prove the necessity for either communism or catastrophe. His book can just as well be used as an argument for the Distributist State, for the historic American plan. There are moral arguments of a compelling nature in favour of such a state; it is well to recognize that the economic arguments are also strong.

Expatriates

James Norman Hall

A few days ago I picked up, at the house of a friend, a three-year-old copy of *Harper's Magazine*, in which there was an article, "Expatriates in Time", by Mr. Eugene Bagger. Magazines are always ancient by the time we dwellers in the backwoods and waters come to read them, and they are, usually, chance copies that have long passed from hand to hand. As they read, the pessimists amongst us take comfort in the thought that, however bad world conditions may have been at the time of writing, they are, probably, much worse now, while the optimists are sure that they must have changed, long since, for the better. As for the expatriate situation, I imagine that it is much as it was several years back; in any case, the subject is always an interesting one for discussion or comment.

Mr. Bagger discusses it, as might be expected in these days, from the psycho-analytical point of view. He begins by speaking of some American acquaintances who are, or were, living in a ruined crusader's castle, in France, eating their suppers and going to bed by the light of wax candles, doing without modern plumbing; in short, behaving in a very silly and archaic fashion, as Mr. Bagger sees it. He then proceeds to discuss expatriates in general, laying bare the impulses which lead them to take their aloof stand from the life of today, and the subterfuges they employ to maintain it with a degree, at least, of comfort.

The psycho-analytical method of examining human conduct sometimes produces excellent results; but I believe that its widespread study has addled more brains than it has clarified during the past ten or fifteen years. Man has invented no means of explaining himself to himself that needs to be handled with greater caution; but increasing bands of students-become-practitioners dive into the psyche with whoops of joy, as though the waters there were as clear as daylight. As a matter of fact, they often are — much clearer than the divers have been taught to believe. But whether or no, dive deep they must and will, and hold their breath for hours before coming up with their spoil. So Mr. Bagger does in this case. The expatriate, he says,

> . . . lives in, by, and for his illusion of superiority. The expatriate has this in common with the neurotic as defined by Adler: he retreats from the competitive order of democratic existence. To this extent the expatriate is a neurotic. He refuses to participate because he refuses to compete. Expatriation, like the diverse phobias and compulsions of neurosis, is a substitute for achievement; a pretended victory in the struggle for existence.
>
> I call the spiritual tendency embodied in this revolt, the Archaic Fallacy, or expatriation in time; and I maintain that it is the exact psychological counterpart of the Geographic Fallacy, or expatriation in the current sense of the word. And I maintain, further, that both of these fallacies are quasi-neurotic symptoms: in the language of Adler's Individual Psychology, neurotic superiority-fictions, dramatizations of the psychic device of distance. Of that, more anon.

There is much more anon, every item with the appropriate label attached. The explanation may cover the case of the Americans living in the crusader's castle – although I very much doubt it – but are all expatriates to be buried with them under this avalanche of Adlerian jargon? One refreshingly simple statement appears: the definition of expatriation as being, not a physical condition, but a state of mind. That, assuredly, it is, and a state of mind common in our day. In highly industrialized lands, resident expatriates are probably much more numerous than the geographical ones who have gone elsewhere to live. It is possible that all of their populations, of adult age, have their expatriate moments when they would like nothing better than to get out from under the kind of existence they are compelled to lead. As for the all-the-year-round expatriate, I believe that it is, in large part, the love of simplicity of life that has made him one.

Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long. . . .

Here is one motive in expatriate psychology that might have been collected without diving, for the mere fishing of it in. Life is too precious to waste. Retirement from the competitive order of democratic existence, in so far as it concerns competition in the accumulation of superfluous wants and the means whereby to satisfy them, instead of being a substitute for achievement seems to me to be achievement of a sensible kind.

Some dozen or fifteen years ago, Mr. Max Beerbohm wrote a sketch which he called "The Golden

Drugget". It professes to be a mere nothing: a description of a shaft of yellow light streaming through the doorway of a mountain inn, and of its effect upon the traveler as he climbs the lonely road toward and beyond it on a dark night. But Mr. Beerbohm has the faculty for saying important things in this easy manner, and his seeming trifle goes to the heart of the matter, here:

> Primitive and essential things have great power to touch the heart of the beholder. I mean such things as a man ploughing a field, or sowing, or reaping; a girl filling a pitcher from a spring; a young mother with her child; a fisherman mending his nets; a light from a lonely hut on a dark night.
>
> Things such as these . . . are not so old as the hills, but they are more significant and eloquent than hills. Hills will outlast them; but hills glacially surviving the life of man on this planet are of as little account as hills tremulous and hot in ages before the life of man had its beginning. Nature is interesting only because of *us*. And the best symbols of us are such sights as I have just mentioned—sights unalterable by fashion, or time, or place, sights that in all countries always were and never will not be.

Much has happened since Mr. Beerbohm wrote these words. He may feel less confident, now, of the "never will not be". Even the most essential symbol, the young mother with her child, is becoming somewhat remarkable for its rarity. As for the others, how far we must go, in these days, in search of them! We hop into our cars and burn the breeze over our fine hard-surfaced roads, scouring the country for a hundred miles around before we find one of them.

It is because he loves such symbols of us, as individuals, much better than symbols of us in the antlike aggregate – Ford factories, Empire State buildings, and the like – and enjoys life most where it may be lived simply, in close touch with earth, that the expatriate takes his aloof stand from much of the life of today. Archaic this stand may be, as Mr. Bagger believes, but there is nothing fallacious about it. Instead of being a neurotic type, I believe that his instincts are healthy ones. I doubt whether the Americans in the crusader's castle were "hankering after the excellencies of life as it was lived in bygone ages" as much as they were for an environment where simplicity of life was still to be found. Their own explanation of why they chose such a dwelling, on a hill, far from a main road, was that they "didn't want to make it easy for people to drop in for a cocktail". This seems to me a more plausible explanation than any of those Mr. Bagger dredges up with such gasping exultation.

Their love for and use of wax candles is much less a dramatization of the psychic device of distance than it is a commonsense recognition of the fact that many of the things our forefathers used with pleasure can still give pleasure to us. All the good things man has discovered or invented are not the products, solely, of our own Thing Age. Whoever knows the beauty of candlelight and of the shadows it throws, will not condemn those who may prefer it to electricity, even at the expense of some convenience. It is not yet proven that the love for some ancient, primitive things is not based upon a sounder instinct than the love for such devices, for example, as the photo-electric cell.

This and other supposed good fairies may prove to be less friendly to mankind than we think them now when we are still lost in admiration of their miraculous powers.

Life, to be interesting and valuable to *us*, must be kept on the human scale, as Mr. Beerbohm observed. If ever again it is measured on that ancient, dependable scale, with what joy will all expatriates, resident and non-resident, return home!

A Note on the Hamlet of Thomas Wolfe

ROBERT PENN WARREN

THOMAS WOLFE owns an enormous talent; and chooses to exercise it on an enormous scale. This talent was recognized promptly enough several years ago when his first novel, *Look Homeward Angel*, came from the press to overwhelm a high percentage of the critics and, in turn, a high percentage of the cash customers. Nor was this sensational success for a first novel undeserved, even if the book was not, as Hugh Walpole suggested, as "near perfect as a novel can be". Now Mr. Wolfe's second novel, *Of Time and the River*,* appears, and the enthusiasm of the reception of the first will probably be repeated; though, I venture to predict, on a scale scarcely so magnificent. That remains to be seen; but it may not be too early to attempt a definition of the special excellence and the special limitations of the enormous talent that has produced two big books and threatens to produce others in the near future.

If Mr. Wolfe's talent is enormous, his energies are more enormous, and fortunately so. A big book is forbidding, but, at the same time, it carries a challenge in its very pretension. It seems to say "This is a serious project and demands serious attention from serious minds." There is, of course, a snobbery of the three-decker. Mr. Wolfe is prolific. His publishers assure the public that he has written in the neighborhood of two million words. In his scheme of six novels two are now published (*Look Homeward Angel*, 1884-1920, and *Of Time and the River*, 1920-1925); two more are already written (*The October Fair*, 1925-1928, and *The Hills Beyond Pentland*, 1838-1926); and two more are projected (*The Death of the Enemy*, 1928-1933, and *Pacific End*, 1791-1884). Presumably, the novels unpublished and unwritten will extend forward and backward the ramifications of the fortunes of the Gant and Pentland families.

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* OF TIME AND THE RIVER *by Thomas Wolfe* (SCRIBNER'S. 912 pp. $3.00).

Look Homeward Angel and the present volume are essentially two parts of an autobiography; the pretense of fiction is so thin and slovenly that Mr. Wolfe in referring to the hero writes indifferently "Eugene Gant" or "I" and "me". There may be many modifications, omissions, and additions in character and event, but the impulse and material are fundamentally personal. The story begins in *Look Homeward Angel* in the latter part of the nineteenth century with the arrival of Gant, the father of the hero, in Altamont, in the State of Catawba, which is Asheville, North Carolina. It continues with the marriage to Eliza Pentland, the birth of the various children, the debaucheries and repentance of old Gant, the growth of the village into a flourishing resort, the profitable real-estate speculations of Eliza, her boarding house, the education of Eugene Gant in Altamont and at the State University, the collapse of old Gant's health, and the departure of Eugene for Harvard. *Of Time and the River* resumes on the station platform as Eugene leaves for Harvard, sees him through three years there in the drama school under "Professor Thatcher", presents in full horror of detail the death of old Gant from cancer of the prostate, treats the period in New York when Eugene teaches the Jews in a college there, and takes the hero to Europe, where he reads, writes, and dissipates tremendously. He is left at the point of embarking for America. During this time he is serving his apprenticeship as a writer and trying to come to terms with his own spirit and with America. So much for the bare materials of the two books.

The root of Mr. Wolfe's talent is his ability at portraiture. The figures of Eliza Gant and old Gant, of Ben and Helen, in *Look Homeward Angel*, are permanent properties of the reader's imagination. Mr. Wolfe has managed to convey the great central vitality of the old man, for whom fires would roar up the chimney and plants would grow, who stormed into his house in the evening laden with food, and whose quality is perpetually heroic, mythical, and symbolic. It is the same with Eliza with her flair for business, her almost animal stupidity, her great, but sometimes aimless, energies, her almost sardonic and defensive love for her son, whom she does not understand, her avarice and her sporadic squandering of money. These two figures dominate both books; even after old Gant is dead the force of his personality, or rather the force of the symbol into which that personality has been elevated, is an active agent, and a point of reference for interpretation.

These two characters, and Ben and Helen in a lesser degree, are triumphs of poetic conception. The uncle in *Of Time and the River*, Bascomb Pentland, exhibits likewise some of the family lineaments, the family vitality, and something of the symbolic aspect of the other characters; but the method of presentation is more conventional and straightforward, and the result more static and anecdotal.

Mr. Wolfe's method in presenting these characters, and the special quality of symbol he manages to derive from them, is subject to certain special qualifications. Obviously it would not serve as a routine process for the treatment of character, at least not on the scale on which it is here rendered. The reader of a novel demands something more realistic, less lyrical; he demands an interplay of characters on another and more specific level, a method less dependent on the direct intrusion of the novelist's personal sensibility. As I have said, the figures of the Gant family are powerful and overwhelming as symbols, as an emotional focus for the novel, and as a point of reference. But the method collapses completely when applied to Starwick, a character of equal importance in Mr. Wolfe's scheme.

We amass a great fund of information concerning Francis Starwick. He was born in a town in the Middle West and early rebelled against the crudities and ugliness of his background. At Harvard he assists Professor Thatcher in the drama school and leads the life of a mannered and affected aesthete, foppish in dress, artificial in speech, over-sensitive and sometimes cruel. He becomes the best friend of Eugene at Harvard. Later he appears in Europe in company with two young women of Boston families, somewhat older than he, who are in love with him and who are willing to pay, with their reputations and their purses, for the pleasure of his conversation. With these three Eugene enters a period of debauchery in Paris. Finally he discovers that Starwick is homosexual, and in his undefinable resentment beats him into unconsciousness.

But this body of information is not all that the writer intends. F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway have been able to use effectively such characters as Starwick and to extract their meaning, because as novelists they were willing to work strictly in terms of character. But in *Of Time and the River* the writer is forever straining to convince the reader of some value in Starwick that is not perceptible, that the writer himself cannot define; he tries, since he is writing an autobiography, to make Starwick a symbol, a kind of *alter ego*, for a certain period of his own experience. The strain is tremendous; and without conviction. The writing about Starwick, as the climax of the relationship approaches, sinks into a slush of poetical bathos and juvenility. And here is the scene of parting:

> ". . . you had a place in my life that no one else has ever had."
>
> "And what was that?" said Starwick.
>
> "I think it was that you were young – my own age – and that you were my friend. Last night after – after that thing happened," he went on, his own face flushing with the pain of the memory, "I thought back over all the time since I have known you. And for the first time I realized that you were the first and only person of my own age that I could call my friend. You were my one true friend – the one I always turned to, believed in with unquestioning devotion. You were the only real

friend that I ever had. Now something else has happened. You have taken from me something that I wanted, you have taken it without knowing that you took it, and it will always be like this. You were my brother and my friend – "

"And now?" said Starwick quietly.

"You are my mortal enemy. Goodbye."

"Goodbye, Eugene," said Starwick sadly. "But let me tell you this before I go. Whatever it was I took from you, it was something that I did not want or wish to take. And I would give it back again if I could."

"Oh, fortunate and favored Starwick," the other jeered. "To be so rich – to have such gifts and not to know he has them – to be forever victorious, and to be so meek and mild."

"And I will tell you this as well," Starwick continued. "Whatever anguish and suffering this mad hunger, this impossible desire, has caused you, however fortunate or favored you may think I am, I would give my whole life if I could change places with you for an hour – know for an hour an atom of your anguish and your hunger and your hope. . . . Oh, to feel so, suffer so, and live so! – however mistaken you may be! . . . To have come young, lusty, and living into this world . . . . not to have come, like me, still-born from your mother's womb – never to know the dead heart and the passionless passion – the cold brain and the cold hopelessness of hope – to be wild, mad, furious, and tormented – but to have belief, to live in anguish, but to live – and not to die." . . . He turned and opened the door. "I would give all I have and all you think I have, for just one hour of it. You call me fortunate and happy. *You* are the most fortunate and happy man I ever knew. Goodbye, Eugene."

"Goodbye, Frank. Goodbye, my enemy."

"And goodbye, my friend," said Starwick. He went out, and the door closed behind him.

The dialogue, the very rhythms of the sentences, and the scene itself, scream the unreality.

The potency of the figures from the family and the failure with Starwick may derive from the autobiographical nature of Mr. Wolfe's work. Eliza and old Gant come from a more primary level of experience, figures of motherhood and fatherhood that gradually, as the book progresses, assume a wider significance and become at the same time a reference for the hero's personal experience. And the author, knowing them first on that level, has a way of knowing them more intimately and profoundly as people than he ever knows Starwick. Starwick is more artificial, because he is at the same time a social symbol and a symbol for a purely private confusion the roots of which are never clear.

Most of the other characters are treated directly. Mr. Wolfe has an appetite for people and occasionally a faculty of very acute perception. The portrait of Abe Jones, the Jewish student at the college in New York, and those of the people at the Coulson household in Oxford, are evidence enough of this capacity. But his method, or rather methods, of presentation are various and not unvaryingly successful. There are long stretches of stenographic dialogue that has little focus, or no focus whatsoever, for instance the first part of the conversation of the business men in the pullman in Book I, of the residents of the hotel in Book IV, of the artistic hangers-on at the Cambridge tea parties, or even of Eugene and his companions in the Paris cafés. Some of this reporting is very scrupulous, and good as reporting, but in its mass, its aimlessness, and its lack of direction it is frequently dull; the momentary interest of recognition is not enough to sustain it, and it bears no precise relation to the intention of the novel. It is conversation for conversation's sake, a loquacity and documentation that testifies to the author's talent but not to his intelligence as an artist. Generally this type of presentation is imitative of Sinclair Lewis's realistic dialogue, but it lacks the meticulous, cautious, and selective quality of the best of Lewis, the controlled malice; it is too random, and in an incidental sense, too heavily pointed.

Further, there are tremendous masses of description and characters. Mr. Wolfe has the habit of developing his own *clichés* for description of character, and of then exhibiting them at irregular intervals. It is as if he realized the bulk of the novel and the difficulty a reader might experience in recognizing a character on reappearance, and so determined to prevent this, if possible, by repetition and insistence. For instance, Starwick and Ann, one of the young women from Boston who is in love with Starwick, have a complete set of tags and labels that are affixed to them time after time during the novel. Mr. Wolfe underrates the memory of the reader; or this may be but another instance of the lack of control that impairs his work.

Only in the section dealing with the Coulson episode does Mr. Wolfe seem to have all his resources for character presentation under control. The men who room in the house, the jaunty Captain Nicholl with his blasted arm and the other two young men from the motor-car factory – these with the Coulsons themselves are very precise to the imagination, and are sketched in with an economy usually foreign to

Mr. Wolfe. The Coulson girl, accepting the mysterious ruin that presides over the household, is best drawn and dominates the group. Here Mr. Wolfe has managed to convey an atmosphere and to convince the reader of the reality of his characters without any of his habitual exaggerations of method and style. This section, with slight alterations, originally appeared as a short story; it possesses what is rare enough in *Of Time and the River*, a constant focus.

I have remarked that some of Mr. Wolfe's material is not subordinated to the intention of the book. What is his intention? On what is the mass of material focussed? What is to give it form? His novels are obviously autobiographical. This means that the binding factor should be, at least in part, the personality of the narrator, or since Mr. Wolfe adopts a disguise, of the hero, Eugene Gant. The two books are, in short, an account of the development of a sensibility; obviously something more is intended than the looseness and irresponsibility of pure memoirs or observations. The work demands comparison with such things as Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*; it may even demand comparison with proper autobiographies such as Rousseau's *Confessions* or *The Education of Henry Adams*. But the comparison with these books is not to the advantage of Mr. Wolfe's performance. It has not the artistry of the first two, the constant and dramatic relation of incident to a developing consciousness of the world, nor has it the historical importance of the third, or the philosophical and intellectual interest of the last.

The hero of *Look Homeward Angel*, though a child and adolescent, is essentially more interesting than the Eugene of *Of Time and the River*. He is more comprehensible, because there is a real (and necessarily conventional) pattern to his developing awareness of the world around him. Further, the life of the Gant household, and even of the community, is patterned with a certain amount of strictness in relation to Eugene: the impress of the vast vitality of old Gant, the lack of understanding on the part of the mother and the perpetual emotional drag of resentment and affection she exerts on her son, the quarrels with Steve, the confusion and pathos of the sexual experiences, the profound attachment between Ben and Eugene, and the climactic and daring scene with Ben's spirit. There is a progress toward maturity, a fairly precise psychological interest. The novel contains much pure baggage and much material that is out of tone, usually in the form of an ironic commentary that violates the point of view; but the book is more of a unit, and is, for that reason perhaps, more exciting and forceful.

In *Of Time and the River* as Eugene in his pullman rides at night across Virginia, going "northward, worldward, towards the secret borders of Virginia, towards the great world cities of his hope, the fable of his childhood legendry", the following passage is interpolated:

> Who has seen fury riding in the mountains? Who has known fury striding in the storm? Who has been mad with fury in his youth, given no rest or peace or certitude by fury, driven on across the earth by fury, until the great vine of his heart was broke, the sinews

wrenched, the little tenement of bone, blood, marrow, brain, and feeling in which great fury raged, was twisted, wrung, depleted, worn out, and exhausted by the fury which it could not lose or put away? Who has known fury, how it came?

How have we breathed him, drunk him, eaten fury to the core, until we have him in us now and cannot lose him anywhere we go? It is a strange and subtle worm that will . . .

Now this furious Eugene is scarcely made so comprehensible. The reader amasses a large body of facts about him, as about Starwick, but with something of the same result. He knows that Eugene is big; that he is a creature of enormous appetites of which he is rather proud; that he has the habit of walking much at night; that he is fascinated by the health and urbanity of his friend Joel and by the personality of Starwick; that he ceases to like Shelley after spending an afternoon in a jail cell; that he reads 20,000 books in ten years; that he is obsessed by the idea of devouring all of life. Then, the reader knows the facts of Eugene's comings and goings, and knows the people he meets and what they say. But the Eugene susceptible to such definition is not the hero of the book, or at least does not function adequately as such. The hero is really that nameless fury that drives Eugene. The book is an effort to name that fury, and perhaps by naming it, to tame it. But the fury goes unnamed and untamed. Since the book is formless otherwise, only a proper emotional reference to such a centre could give it form. Instead, at the centre there is this chaos that steams and bubbles in rhetoric and apocalyptic apostrophe, sometimes grand and sometimes febrile and empty; the centre is a maelstrom, perhaps artificially generated at times; and the other, tangible items are the flotsam and jetsam and dead wood spewed up, iridescent or soggy as the case may be.

It may be objected that other works of literary art, and very great ones at that, have heroes who defy definition and who are merely centres of "fury". For instance, there is Hamlet, or Lear. But a difference may be observed. Those characters may defy the attempt at central definition, but the play hangs together in each case as a structure without such definition; that is, there has been no confusion between the sensibility that produced a play, as an object of art, and the sensibility of a hero in a play. (And the mere fact that *Hamlet* and *Lear* employ verse as a vehicle adds further to the impression of discipline, focus, and control.)

There are two other factors in the character of Eugene that may deserve mention. The hero feels a sense of destiny and direction, the sense of being "chosen" in the midst of a world of defeated, aimless, snobbish, vulgar, depleted, or suicidal people. (This is, apparently, the source of much of the interpolated irony in both books, an irony almost regularly derivative and mechanical.) In real life this conviction of a high calling may be enough to make a "hero" feel that life does have form and meaning; but the mere fact that a hero in a novel professes the high calling and is contrasted in his social contacts with an inferior breed does not, in itself, give the novel form and meaning. The transference of the matter from the actuality of life to the actuality of art cannot be accomplished so easily. Second, at the very end of the novel Eugene, about to embark for America, sees a woman who, according to the somewhat extended lyrical epilogue, makes him "lose" self and so be "found":

> After all the blind, tormented wanderings of youth, that woman would become his heart's centre and the target of his life, the image of immortal one-ness that again collected him to one, and hurled the whole collected passion, power, and might of his one life into the blazing certitude, the immortal governance and unity, of love.

Certainly this is what we call fine writing; it may or may not be good writing. And probably, falling in love may make a man "find himself"; but this epilogue scarcely makes the novel find itself.

It is possible sometimes that a novel possessing no structure in the ordinary sense of the word, or not properly dominated by its hero's personality or fortunes, may be given a focus by the concrete incorporation of an idea, or related ideas. Now, *Of Time and the River* has such a leading idea, but an idea insufficient in its operation. The leading symbol of the father, old Gant, gradually assumes another aspect, not purely personal; he becomes, in other words, a kind of symbol of the fatherland, the source, the land of violence, drunkenness, fecundity, beauty, and vigour on which the hero occasionally reflects during his wanderings and to which in the end he returns. But this symbol is not the total expression of the idea, which is worked out more explicitly and at length. There are long series of cinematic flashes of "phases of American life": locomotive drivers, gangsters, pioneers, little towns with the squares deserted at night, evangelists, housewives, rich and suicidal young men, whores on subways, drunk college boys. Or there are more lyrical passages, less effective in pictorial detail, such as the following:

> It was the wild, sweet, casual, savage, and incredibly lovely earth of America, and of the wilderness, and it haunted them like legends, and pierced them like a sword, and filled them with a wild and swelling prescience of joy that was like sorrow and delight.

This kind of material alternates with the more sedate or realistic progress of the chronicle, a kind of running commentary of patriotic mysticism on the more tangible events and perceptions. For Mr. Wolfe has the mysticism of the American idea that we find in Whitman, Sandburg, Masters, Crane, and Benét, or more recently and frivolously, in Coffin and Paul Engel. He pants for the Word, the union that will clarify all the disparate and confused elements which he enumerates and many of which fill him with revulsion and disgust. He, apparently, has experienced the visionary moment he proclaims, but, like other mystics, he suffers some difficulty when he attempts to prepare it for the consumption of ordinary citizens of the Republic. He must wreak some indignity on the chastity of the vision. This indignity is speech: but he burns, perversely, to speak.

The other promulgators of the American vision have been poets. Mr. Wolfe, in addition to being a poet in instinct, is, as well, the owner on a large scale of many of the gifts of the novelist. He attempts to bolster, or as it were to prove, the mystical and poetic vision by fusing it with a body of everyday experience of which the novelist ordinarily treats. But there is scarcely a fusion or a correlation; rather, an oscillation. On the tangible side, the hero flees from America, where his somewhat quivering sensibilities are frequently tortured, and goes to Europe; in the end, worn out by drinking and late hours, disgusted with his friends, unacquainted with the English or the French, and suffering homesickness, he returns to America. But Mr. Wolfe, more than most novelists, is concerned with the intangible; not so much with the psychological process and interrelation as with the visionary "truth".

The other poets, at least Whitman and Crane, have a certain advantage over the poet in Mr. Wolfe. They overtly consented to be poets; Mr. Wolfe has not consented. Therefore their vision is purer, the illusion of communication (*illusion*, for it is doubtful that they have really communicated the central vision) is more readily palatable, because they never made a serious pretense of proving it autobiographically or otherwise; they were content with the hortatory moment, the fleeting symbol, and the affirmation. (Mr. Benét, of course, did attempt in *John Brown's Body* such a validation, but with a degree of success that does not demand comment here.) It may simply be that the poets were content to be lyric poets, and therefore could more readily attempt the discipline of selection and concentration; in those respects, even Whitman shows more of an instinct for form than does Mr. Wolfe. Mr. Wolfe is astonishingly diffuse, astonishingly loose in his rhetoric – qualities that, for the moment, may provoke more praise than blame. That rhetoric is sometimes grand, but probably more often tedious and tinged with hysteria. Because he is officially writing prose and not poetry he has no caution of the *clichés* of phrase or rhythm, and no compunction about pilfering from other poets. His vocabulary itself is worth comment. If the reader will inspect the few passages quoted in the course of this essay he will observe a constant quality of strain, a fancy for the violent word or phrase (but often conventionally poetic as well as violent): "wild, sweet, casual, savage . . .", "haunted them like legends", "no rest or peace or certitude of fury", "target of his life", "blazing certitude, the immortal governance and unity, of love". Mr. Wolfe often shows very powerfully the poetic instinct, and the praise given by a number of critics to his "sensuousness" and "gusto" is not without justification in the fact; but even more often his prose simply shows the poetic instinct unbuckled on a kind of week-end debauch. He sometimes wants it both ways: the structural irresponsibility of prose and the emotional intensity of poetry. He may overlook the fact that the intensity is rarely to be achieved without a certain rigour in selection and structure.

Further, Mr. Wolfe, we understand from blurbs and reviewers, is attempting a kind of prose epic. American literature has produced one, *Moby Dick*. There is much in common between *Moby Dick* and *Of Time and the River*, but there is one major difference. Melville had a powerful fable, a myth of human destiny, which saved his work from the centrifugal impulses of his genius, and which gave it structure and climax. Its dignity is inherent in the fable itself. No such dignity is inherent in Mr. Wolfe's scheme, if it can properly be termed a scheme. The nearest approach to it is in the character of old Gant, but that is scarcely adequate. And Mr. Wolfe has not been able to compensate for the lack of a fable by all his well-directed and misdirected attempts to endow his subject with a proper dignity, by all his rhetorical insistence, all the clarity and justice of his incidental poetic perceptions, all the hysteria or magnificent hypnosis.

Probably all of these defects, or most of them, are inherent in the autobiographical impulse when the writer attempts to make this special application of it. In the first place, all the impurities and baggage in the book must strike the author as of peculiar and necessary value because they were observed or actually occurred. But he is not writing a strict autobiography in which all observations or experiences, however vague, might conceivably find a justification. He is trying, and this in the second place, to erect the autobiographical material into an epical and symbolic importance, to make of it a fable, a "Legend of Man's Hunger in his Youth". This much is definitely declared by the sub-title.

Mr. Wolfe promises to write some historical novels, and they may well be crucial in the definition of his genius, because he may be required to re-order the use of his powers. What, thus far, he has produced are fine fragments, several brilliant pieces of portraiture, and many sharp observations on men and nature: in other words, these books are really voluminous notes from which a fine novel, or several fine novels, might be written. If he never writes these novels, it may yet be that his books will retain a value as documents of some historical importance and as confused records of an unusual personality. Meanwhile, despite his admirable energies and his powerful literary endowments, his work illustrates once more the limitations, perhaps the necessary limitations, of an attempt to exploit directly and naïvely the personal experience and the self-defined personality in art.

And meanwhile it may be well to recollect that Shakespeare merely wrote *Hamlet;* he was *not* Hamlet.

Dean Inge and Modern Christianity

Part II

ROBERT SHAFER

THE FIRST half of this essay placed before us Dr. Inge's answer to the question, What does he mean by Christianity? I have now to take up the ungrateful task of explaining why that answer cannot be said to fulfill its promise. At first sight it would appear that any little shilly-shallying over the historical basis of Christianity had finally ended when Dr. Inge wrote the paragraph quoted at the close of the last section. The uninitiated, it is true, might think that even here his words are not free from ambiguity; but those who have become acquainted with the mystical doctrine of a continuing revelation must see that he has reached the point of considering the Incarnation "not as an isolated historical event, but as the revelation of the highest law of the spiritual world". This in fact is his own statement, and it can have only one meaning: that modern Christianity must base itself solely on mystical experience, and that it must quietly throw overboard any alleged historical revelation, because we have come to see that no evidence for anything of the kind can ever be sufficient, and, even more, because in the world as it really is there are no supernatural occurrences.

There can, indeed, be no doubt at all that this is what Dr. Inge meant to say when, in 1918, he published *The Philosophy of Plotinus*; and he has allowed his crucial statements to remain in two succeeding editions of this work, the latter of which appeared in 1929 with the information that it was to be considered "final". It is, consequently, not a little disturbing to find that in 1922, in the second series of his *Outspoken Essays*, Dr. Inge explicitly affirmed his belief in the divinity of the historical Christ, adding, "If I felt that I had lost it, I should not think it honest to call myself any longer a Christian, or to remain in the Christian ministry," and concluding:

> There is a great temptation to take up a position well above high-water mark, where no possible discoveries in either science or criticism can disturb us. But I remember a sneer of Professor Huxley against this kind of apologetic. "No longer in contact with fact at any point, the Church will be able to boast that it has won the peace which no man can take away." Our religion cannot, I think, be made immune from dependence on past history. But happily the evidence is not solely that by which we judge other strange events reported by ancient writers. The Christ in us bears witness to the Christ for us. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. And the Holy Spirit, in bearing this witness, sets the stamp of Divinity not only on the revelation, but on the historical revealer. In other words, the voice of God within us speaks in the tones of Jesus of Nazareth.

We can only conclude for ourselves, it seems to me, that Dr. Inge is trying to have it both ways; and in such a passage as this we can see how he attempts it, and why. If an historical revelation is the necessary basis of Christianity, there was one, and mystical experience confirms it; but if after all there was no historical revelation, mystical experience confirms something else just as good which is what Christianity really has been all along anyhow. The temptation to retreat to a position "well above high-water mark" must be resisted; but if after all retreat becomes necessary, it should be remembered that it is practicable, and that indeed it "gives great strength and confidence to the believer".

The same tactics are followed in Dr. Inge's discussion of the divinity of Christ. He is "strongly convinced", he has told us, "that the cause of religion has little to fear and much to hope from a thoroughly courageous treatment" of the difficulty presented by the "exploded science" which the Bible contains. "The present state of affairs", he continues, "is intolerable. A clergyman is expected to believe, or at least to profess, a variety of opinions, relating to strictly scientific facts, which all educated men know to be absurd, and it is supposed by many that we cannot be Christians unless we believe them. This is to put a stumbling block in the way of faith." Accordingly, to remove this stumbling block, Dr. Inge roundly declares that the question of miracles is a scientific, not at all a religious question. "To make our belief in Christ as a living and life-giving Spirit depend on any abnormal occurrences in the physical world seems to me to be an undetected residue of materialism; and if such occurrences are prized as proving that God can 'do something' in the natural order, those who so prize them seem to me . . . to confound one system of values and to degrade another. . . . Let these problems be handled with all reverence and caution; but do not let us base on controvertible grounds a faith which stands on its own sure foundation." Yet in the same paragraph from which these sentences come, he writes: "Those who believe, as we do, that Christ was a Divine and unique Being, will certainly not be guilty of the presumption of denying that the circumstances of His birth into the world and of His withdrawal in bodily presence from it, may well have been also unique." Is this "reverence and caution", or are the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection not miracles, or where are we?

We are in presence of the fact that Dr. Inge made his decision in favour of Christianity before he began to write about it, and that consequently in all his books and essays he has written, not objectively, not historically, not critically, but as an apologist, as a defender of the faith. We have seen that, despite the Anglo-Catholicism of his parents, Dr. Inge entered the ministry convinced of the necessity of a radical reconstruction of belief. It is evident that he was not convinced lightly – that the necessity seemed to him fundamental. But no evidence suggests that Christian belief itself was ever really in question. It appears, on the contrary, that this was regarded from the beginning as beyond question, as without the slightest doubt a true and valid belief, and that the only problem which confronted him was the problem of restatement in the light of modern knowledge. And this is the easier to understand because clearly what he most valued in Christianity was that which is commonly called its other-worldliness – an element which certainly does not stand or fall with any historical revelation and which modern science leaves untouched – and because he relied on the testimony of the mystics to support him in a spiritual metaphysic permitting the redefinition of revelation and the Incarnation in a manner which, he felt, might satisfy the demands both of history and of modern knowledge.

Dr. Inge's confidence in the stand he has taken, however, has not rested upon any miraculous metaphysical construction which he has finally accomplished, despite the difficulties which have vanquished every other hopeful thinker. It has rested upon faith – upon the *felt* unity of still unreduced opposites. But the faith that apparent contradictions are ultimately unreal is, of course, a standing invitation to mere verbal jugglery – and an invitation which no monistic philosopher has ever found it possible to resist. The system of Plotinus is no worse in this respect than the system of Hegel; but it is, also, no better. Both are far removed from the world of experience as it really is. And Dr. Inge is not blind to this fact; but he is ready with an explanation* which, true though it is, enables him to act just as though he were blind. For his conviction is unshakeable that the structure of the universe as set forth by Plotinus is, though an incomplete scheme containing symbolic elements, still, an expression of the absolute truth; and, furthermore, he is equally persuaded that nothing save a rational monism deserves even to be considered as a philosophical possibility. This is his invincible bias, of which I have spoken; and it has apparently encouraged him to believe that, since contradictories are "ultimately" *not* contradictory, since all conflicts will "ultimately" be resolved into harmony, meanwhile he may permit himself to be inconsistent with impunity, so long as he is engaged in the good work of leading men towards the true faith.

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* Given above, when it was pointed out that our syntheses must always, and inevitably, be premature.

I advance this explanation not without hesitancy, but because it is the only discoverable one which will account for a long series of difficulties spread throughout Dr. Inge's writings. I do not mean to imply, however, that Dr. Inge is really conscious of this peculiar characteristic of his work. I myself, I will confess, find it equally difficult to believe that he is or that he is not. But that practically all of his writings are really defensive, whatever their ostensible nature, admits of no doubt; and that sooner or later he has taken advantage of every opportunity to try to have things both ways is, unfortunately, but too clear. His early book, *Christian Mysticism*, shows exactly how things were to go. In its Preface he states frankly that though the volume is written as if it were an historical sketch, it is really a contribution to apologetics. This is straightforward, but even if we know that we are dealing with a wolf in sheep's clothing, our troubles are not over. For presumably no wolf would consider it worth his while to adopt a disguise if he did not accommodate his actions thereto, though not his intentions. It is precisely so, here as well as in later performances, with Dr. Inge. The highest and most important claims are made for mystical experience, but – as the reader may gradually learn if he watches closely – only for mystical experience as defined and understood in accordance with certain stringent and comprehensive requirements which are themselves nowhere discussed or justified. Emphasis is laid upon the unanimity of the mystics in their testimony, but wherein their unanimity consists grows difficult to discover as one learns of the pitfalls into which many different kinds of mystics have dropped. Great emphasis is laid on the assertion that mystical experience does not carry its subject beyond reason, though we are warned that many mystics have been deceived into supposing it does, and that reason, properly viewed, is really something larger and finer than reason – "the logic of the whole personality" – which itself, however, as we are elsewhere told, is not an achieved reality but a potentiality. It is strongly insisted that ecstasy is an illegitimate and pernicious accretion upon mysticism, yet it appears that the absoluteness of mystical experience can only be described in the terms used to describe ecstasy. We are informed that mystics see visions of certain kinds, or that their experiences leave certain marks, depending upon fashion or upon their own expectations, and that, accordingly, these obviously subjective phenomena accompanying mystical experience do not belong to its essence. But at the same time we are told that this subjective element does not impair the objective quality and validity of the experience itself, and that, moreover, *some* "ecstatic visions" "have every right to be considered as real irradiations of the soul from the light that 'for ever shines' ".

This is not all, but it is enough. The fact is that the testimony of the mystics is sufficiently various and conflicting to afford Dr. Inge a wide field from which he may pick and choose whatever he wants in order to "prove" that mysticism is really whatever he may have determined it should be in accordance with his particular need. And this is what he does — yet his need is such that, even so, he is forced to present the mystic as a person sitting on both sides of a good many fences.

I need not add further illustrations of the attempt to have things both ways, but must mention what may be termed a special development of it. Dr. Inge has gradually assumed a number of rôles which appear to be unrelated; and his pronouncements, now in one, now in another of these rôles, have likewise appeared to be unrelated. Hence it is difficult to know where he stands or what he regards as established, not only because his defensive tactics are often disguised or indirect, and not only because his many declarations have varied widely with varying circumstances, but also because he has too many characters. Thus when he speaks as a philosopher he is, as we have seen, an uncompromising monist — but when he speaks as a moralist he is an uncompromising dualist. When he speaks as a patriotic Englishman he is all for nationalism in religion and for "religion in the nation's service", but when he speaks as a theologian he carefully points out that religion has its centre not in nature, nor in man, nor in society, but in God. When he speaks as a Protestant he is an individualist, and emphasizes Christianity's "deep-rooted individualism" which causes it to revolt "against the sacrifice of whole classes in the interest of State-efficiency"; yet when he speaks as a sociologist and statesman he is the foe of individualism, defends the industrial conditions prevail-ing in England in the early nineteenth century precisely because a whole class was, in effect, then being sacrificed in the interest of "State-efficiency", insistently demands the enforced application of the "science" of eugenics in the modern state, and exclaims that "the fierce determination not to be 'exploited' is radically unchristian".

These words are quoted from *Christian Ethics and Modern Problems*, in the course of which Dr. Inge assumes successively several of the rôles just mentioned, with consequences reflecting little credit upon his powers of thought. The book, indeed, as a whole is fundamentally confused. It is an attempt to effect, within its field, a reconstruction, or modernization, similar to that which its author has proposed in the sphere of theology. Dr. Inge says:

> That our religion no longer attracts those who are shaping the thought of our time is notorious. I am not thinking of the alienation of "the masses" – Christ never thought of men in the mass, and had no expectation of finding the *vox populi* on His side; nor of the spirit of revolt against all conventions and traditions, which is probably a temporary phenomenon, an aspect of the general unrest caused by the break-up of a phase of civilization. It is the best thought of our time which is partially estranged from the religion which ought to be its deepest inspiration, and the revolt is partly ethical. This is the situation which has moved me to write this book.

No one can deny that the situation exists, and the effort to meet it is, in addition, simply the logical completion of the work to which Dr. Inge early set his hand. His contention, briefly, is this: that Jesus was a layman who had no intention of founding a new religion or of instituting an ecclesiastical establishment, that what he preached was a "layman's religion", ethical "through and through", and that "the whole history of Catholic imperialism has been an aberration which has lamentably retarded the spiritual influence of the Gospel". Hence we must return to the Gospel itself to learn what Jesus really taught. And when we do so we find that Jesus was not a legislator, that even his celebrated pronouncement concerning marriage need not be regarded as an exception to his practice, and that this consisted essentially in placing before men a spiritual evaluation of life and a way of release, of redemption, from corrupting entanglement with the world. Thus the Gospel gives us "no system of Ethics, no code of rules for conduct, but an outlook, a manner of thinking and acting, a standard of values, which necessarily penetrate every corner of the personality". This means that the fundamental basis of Christian ethics lies in the transvaluation of all worldly values propounded by Jesus "in the light of our divine sonship and heavenly citizenship". Man's real nature is spiritual; his true home is the eternal world of immaterial reality; there is a way thither. The emphasis of Jesus is not upon outward acts, but upon the character, the reformed nature, necessary if we are to pursue that "way" – though we are not left in doubt as to the course of action truly expressive of right character, nor as to the fact that a man shall be known by his acts. Dr. Inge's exposition of the resultant positive teaching of Jesus can best be illustrated by the quotation of a few passages:

It has been said that the problem of human conduct is to find a sufficient motive. . . . Christ's appeal is summed up in the "new commandment" of *love*. "Love to God" comprises the consciousness of deep dependence, the sentiment of devout gratitude, and the conviction that the love and the presence of God surround us like an atmosphere. . . . Christian love is the recognition of a fact – the brotherhood of humanity in Christ, involving a claim – that in all things we should seek the highest good of our neighbour, as if his good were our own. . . . For Christ, the soul alone is of primary importance, though works of mercy and charity are given a high place in the list of moral duties. We must not assume that in a less simple state of society He would have preferred direct relief to other methods of helping those in trouble. . . . That nothing happens without God's will was a firm conviction of Christ. It follows that all things work together for good to those who love God. The Gospel [thus] affirms a fundamental optimism; but it faces the extremity of temporal evil as no other creed has done. Without attempting to make man invulnerable – that last infirmity of all Greek philosophy – it accepts the Cross. The idea that the character "is made perfect through suffering" was not strange to Plato, and appears in the later books of the Old Testament. . . . It is most important to realize that the Christian keeps no *meum* and *tuum* account with his Maker. He makes no claim to individual justice, remembering what treatment his Master received. We shall receive justice at God's hands, no doubt, but not what the unregenerate and unloving would call justice. . . . Both the conditions and the rewards of blessedness are spoken of by our Lord as to be found, imperfectly, no doubt, but actually, even in this present life. Those *are* blessed who are what He described. The Kingdom of God is within us; it is not our environment but our own reaction upon it which makes us blessed or unblest. And yet our present state is very incomplete. The promise is that we may become something higher than ourselves, something of what God is. Christ does not condemn us for this insufficiency, but only for not being aware of it. . . . Humility has been misunderstood or misrepresented by critics of Christianity in all ages. It means pure receptivity. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? But if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" It means "thinking soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith". It does not mean wilful self-disparagement and refusal to accept responsibilities for which we are fitted. . . . The problem of evil is never discussed in the Gospels. . . . Christ was more tolerant of sins of passion than the Catholic Church, and decidedly more tolerant of what was merely disreputable than typical Protestantism. Both tolerances are part of the inwardness of His ethics, and of His indifference to the secular ordering of social life. . . . The sins which chiefly aroused the indignation of Christ were hypocrisy, hard-heartedness, and worldliness. . . . From the very first, the Christians needed new words, or words used in a new sense, to express the ethical ideas which they had learned from Christ. Such words are love, joy, peace, humility, faith and hope. One of the most remarkable of these is *joy*, as an element in the good life. Negatively, it means freedom from anxiety, release from the cares of life, those "troubles that never come" which spoil so much of human happiness. Positively, it is the state of mind natural to those who have heard the good news, who live surrounded by affection and good-will given and received, and above all who live in the consciousness that the love and care of their heavenly Father continually watch over them.

Dr. Inge proceeds, following his exposition of the genuine ethical teaching of Jesus, to devote more than one-fourth of his book to a discussion of "two distortions" of Christianity – asceticism, and "theocratic imperialism" or, in other words, the Roman Catholic Church. He points out that Christianity does require believers to discipline themselves, "as athletes train for a race", but adds that influences which did not originate within Christianity, which were indeed "completely alien to the sane and genial temper of the Founder", produced a wave of extreme asceticism in the lands surrounding the Mediterranean during the early centuries of our era, and so infected the Christion religion with a distorting element which it has taken long to expel. He then goes on to assert that the second aberration, "the monstrous growth of a theocratic Empire in Europe", "has been far more disastrous", and that "its evil consequences do not seem to be diminishing"; and he attempts to show "how the Ethics of the Gospel have been at every point poisoned and distorted by the insatiable claims of this terrible organization".*

* Dr. Inge's criticism of Catholicism is not confined to his chapter on "Theocratic Imperialism", but is spread throughout this book. In its Conclusion he says that in reading through his manuscript he became "painfully conscious that it may be taken, in some quarters, as a sustained polemic against the most august and powerful of the Christian Churches". Yet this, he declares, "would be an entire misrepresentation". It would be "an entire misrepresentation", it appears, because it was not his purpose to attack Catholicism, but to write about Christian Ethics. The Roman Catholic Church merely happened to be in his way. Much that he says about Rome is, unhappily, true enough, though there are other things to be said which he is very unwilling to admit. No disinterested reader, I think, can avoid the conclusion that he is venomously prejudiced. It has to be remembered, how-

The latter half of the book is devoted to a consideration of modern ethical problems, social and personal. In the course of this survey certain conclusions emerge, which I believe may be fairly summarized as follows:

A. That the "enlightened conscience of our time", stimulated by greatly changed and increasingly complex social conditions, and by a vast increment of new knowledge, to which important additions are constantly being made, has revolted from the traditional, authoritative ethics of the churches, and is constructing a new and independent ethical code, on a scientific basis. In this as in certain other respects, the modern revolt from the Churches deserves sympathy and approval, because it is a revolt from unworthy conceptions or elements which have wrongly been attached to Christianity, which form no part of its essence, and which true Christians should earnestly repudiate.

B. That modern scientific ethics, in fact, are at many points in close accord with Christian ethics as set forth in the Gospel. This is true, for example, of the precepts derived from eugenics:

> Sir Francis Galton used to say that eugenics ought to be a religion. It is a religion, and its name is Christianity. The Gospels contain the most uncompromising eugenic utterances. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."

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ever, that Dr. Inge wrote in fear of a new "purge" of the Anglican Church which promised to send hundreds of priests and their followers to Rome; – and no one can doubt that such a "purge", which is still a real possibility, though apparently a much less threatening one than in the late nineteen-twenties, would be, for good or ill, a fateful turning-point in the history of Christianity.

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." In this, as in several other matters, the new morality can appeal to the Founder of Christianity across long ages in which His followers have distorted His precepts or failed to understand them.

Thus we see that the revelation given in our age through science has an organic connection with the revelation once given through Christ. Specific duties, the applications of general principles, change with changing circumstances; but the principles themselves stand firm, and are only strengthened with increasing knowledge.

C. That in some respects, however, modern scientific ethics represent a genuinely new development, based on considerations scarcely hinted at in the Gospel. It has to be admitted that "a strange blindness about the future pervades all the Ethics of the New Testament, including the Gospels". We must, Dr. Inge continues,

> confess that in many of our social problems we cannot find the help in the Gospels which we should have welcomed, because the early Christians never thought about an earthly future for the human race. This is a real omission, I will not say a defect, in the canonical books. But it is not true to say that it throws the moral teaching of the New Testament as a whole out of focus. . . . All that we can justly say is that our duty to posterity did not interest the early Christians any more than it did Marcus Aurelius or the Neoplatonists.

Hence the modern "enlightened conscience" is doing a much needed work in filling out Christian ethics at a point where they were incomplete, when it attempts to formulate ways and means of realizing "our aspirations for a better world, for a happier state of society" gradually to be achieved through human effort.

D. That the modern world, nevertheless, rejecting old and inadequate standards, has only begun to set in their place new and better ones. We are just entering upon a novel phase of civilization, as distinct from the past as was the period following the Renaissance from the Middle Age. We must expect real changes and, doubtless, strange experiments. We must welcome gladly all new knowledge and face the future confidently. The new religion and ethics of the next age may be long in reaching completion, because our science and philosophy are still chaotic, and reconstruction now looks to many of us like destruction; but "we must have faith in the power of society to take free forms of its own choosing". And meanwhile "by far the greater part of the old religious morality stands where it did". And the ethics of Jesus do afford us an adequate basis for critical discrimination between new proposals as they are successively advanced.

I think it will be understood, particularly from the last paragraph, why it is a ticklish business to attempt to formulate Dr. Inge's conclusions. And these conclusions plainly show why it must be said that his book, despite much in it that is simply excellent, is fundamentally confused. Dr. Inge very well knows that Christianity is a gospel of spiritual redemption, not a gospel of social reform; that Christ's kingdom is a kingdom not of this world, and the house of God a house not made with hands; that the Christian lives as a stranger to this life, because his heart is elsewhere; that the Christian desires rather to mend himself than the world, knowing how the world is ever changing, and being changed by men, and yet ever remaining the same – knowing too the worthlessness of the world's goods, and how men are coloured, formed, remade, by what they love – knowing, indeed, that man cannot serve both God and Mammon. Dr. Inge well knows all of this and more to like effect. He has said it many times; and he knows that the spirit of worldliness is the undying, irreconcilable enemy of Christianity, and that any process of secularizing Christian belief or of attenuating its moral dualism is a surrender of the temple, as he has insisted early and late against Bishop Gore and the Christian Social Union. He knows also that true Christians have ever formed a small body, often despised, always isolated, yet subtly exerting an influence inexplicable to the worldly, which has permeated society and which has receded only to flow out again in fresh streams, so that, by one of those paradoxes which tease the mind with their profound truth, it is an indisputable fact that only other-worldliness can and does transform the world.

Yet at the same time Dr. Inge has more and more felt the pressure of the world as he has mingled in its activities and has been brought into close association with its "best minds". He has been greatly disturbed by the spectacle of those "best minds", keen, well-meaning, confident, and independent, and has been irresistibly impelled, in the end, to join himself to them. The conclusion that in so doing he was obeying the voice of God was undoubtedly facilitated by his long study of Plotinus; and thus, just as in his religious philosophy he evidently determined to join contradictories by sheer force, since there was no other way, so equally in ethics he has now sought to join the other-worldly morality of the Gospels with modern scientific humanitarianism. That some elements in the latter ought to meet with the approval of Christians nobody should deny;* and that Christian ethics, moreover, stand in need of re-interpretation in every age is an indisputable fact. It is equally indisputable, too, that the relations between the Christian way of life and life in the world constitute a grave problem which has never been completely solved. This is not the place to enter into a discussion of these difficulties, the point at present being simply that these are the difficulties which Dr. Inge should have faced and tried to deal with, and that he has, instead, tried to evade them. He has done what he could to obscure or even conceal the ultimate and crucial fact, underlying all superficial interrelations, that Christian ethics are essentially other-worldly, while modern scientific humanitarianism arises from the conviction that man's true and only home is in this world. And in so doing he has attempted not to surrender either side of the dilemma, assured by his Plotinian monism that "ultimately" it is not a real dilemma. His book is in fact coloured throughout by the philosophy of Plotinus, as was to be expected; and as it was this philosophy which early encouraged him, as a defender of the faith, to try to make "the world" hospitable to Christianity, so it has been the same philosophy which has caused him to end in seeming merely to make Christianity hospitable to "the world". But who can be grateful for this? Certainly not "the world", which never has cared for more than the name of Christianity, and which now cares not even for that.*

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* Dr. Inge gives his support to birth-control. Certain of the Roman Catholic arguments against it – *e.g.*, "it is contrary to nature" – reach the height of absurdity and merit only derision. Dr. Inge correctly observes that in considering the population-question and the sexual problems of the individual in some circumstances we are bound to take the world and human nature, not as they might be or should be, but as they are; and he points out that the United States, as a consequence of its attempt to forbid birth-control, has become "the classic land of abortion". He quotes a learned and conservative investigator of the subject who "estimates that 2,000,000 infants are so destroyed every year" in the Land of the Free. I think Dr. Inge is in the right of it here, but that this is precisely one of those questions of worldly policy – where the choice is between two evils, or concerns only the earthly future of society – which lies outside of the field of Christian ethics. No Christian can regard birth-control as desirable, but it is no more "contrary to nature", in any legitimate sense of that word, than is artificial illumination, and it may be in many circumstances the best course actually open to choice.

II

It is, I hope, evident that I have chosen to dwell upon the contradictions in Dr. Inge's work for no light reason. The men are exceedingly few who have not sooner or later opened themselves to the charge of loose thinking; and the critic who passes hastily over these failures, to draw attention to positive merits, usually follows a wise course. Loose thought, however, is the central characteristic of the writings under consideration.* Dr. Inge has taken both sides of so many questions that this fact must be faced and its explanation sought. What else, indeed, can criticism accomplish, when it is discovered that very little can be predicated of a man of which the contradiction cannot be found elsewhere in his own books?

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* Dr. Inge's treatment of humanitarianism perfectly illustrates his confusion. He recognizes Irving Babbitt as a "thoughtful and brilliant writer", agrees that humanitarianism is rooted in sentimentalism, and even declares that "history has proved that 'the end of sentimentalism is homicidal mania' ". "Nevertheless," he goes on to say, "the movement has a long list of salutary reforms to its credit," and "in no other field can we assert with so much confidence that there has been real moral progress in the modern period". This stultifying conclusion Dr. Inge reaches by concentrating his attention exclusively on certain "reforms" of which he approves – chiefly, at present, the movement against cruelty to animals, which has his warm support because the doctrine of evolution and the philosophy of Plotinus have united

The explanation, I have suggested, is to be found in the mystical philosophy which, when he turned to it very early in his life, speciously promised to lead Dr. Inge in triumph through all difficulties. It has often been observed that mystical writers, if they turn to

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to convince him that animals (and vegetables) are our brothers, and have souls as we do. He himself has "never killed anything larger than a wasp, and that was in self-defence". On the other hand, he approves of capital punishment, not only for murder, but for all "incorrigible offenders, including habitual thieves". He very aptly quotes "a French professor of Law" who "declared that if capital sentences were done away with it should be announced that 'henceforth the law of France will guarantee the lives of none but murderers' ".

* This is distressingly evident in *God and the Astronomers*, which, besides, contains nothing not already familiar to readers of Dr. Inge's earlier books, and almost nothing not better said in one or another of them. Hence, despite Dr. Inge's own valuation of the book, quoted at the beginning of this essay, I see no reason for entering into any discussion of it. And in fact Dr. Inge himself, in *Vale*, condemns the book as a failure at the same time that he makes high claims for it. Upon its first appearance the book aroused some interest because of Dr. Inge's explicit recognition of indebtedness to certain Roman Catholic writers and in particular to "the new Thomist school". Reviewers familiar with Dr. Inge's hatred of the Roman Catholic Church detected here a patent inconsistency – and were, of course, quite wrong. Dr. Inge is further from St. Thomas than he seems to realize, but he long ago plainly aligned himself with the philosophic tradition which found one of its greatest exponents in St. Thomas; and there is no necessary connection whatever between this tradition and institutional Catholicism.

metaphysics, exhibit quite regularly a leaning towards pantheism. They may stop short of it – perhaps all Christian mystics have stopped short of it, though this has been seriously questioned – yet, nevertheless, they approach it closely; and it stands ever before them as a tempting goal; and thus, in all save *feeling*, they are drawn to the verge of something indistinguishable in substance from a sheer naturalism. Dr. Inge has not become a pantheist, but he has been converted, as we have noticed, to pan-psychism. Sometimes a real light is shed on questions of this kind by the discovery of an unexpected relationship. I do not wish to dwell upon it, yet it is an arresting fact that Dr. Inge has thus reached a philosophical position identical with that reached, in his own very different way, by Samuel Butler, the author of *Erewhon* – and, as any one may easily learn, with consequences likewise identical.*

Whatever form it may take, indeed, the refusal to accept humbly the paradoxical lessons of our actual experience ends in disaster. Impressions are to be sifted, ordered, criticized – that is all true. Experience is the consequence. And it is experience itself, after all false appearances have been detected and discounted, which remains still paradoxical at the close. And it makes little difference in the final account what basis a man may have chosen for selection, or how praiseworthy his intentions may have seemed to be. If he refuses to accept any genuine element in experience on the ground that to do so is logically impossible – if he obstinately insists that because change is the universal rule, permanence is an illusion – he is plunged at once into immitigable falsehood against which he will struggle vainly all his days. Dr. Inge has sought, like others before him, to escape this gulf, and yet at the same time to save reason, a little damaged but intact, as an organ of absolute truth, by embracing a panpsychism which is at once immanent and transcendent. This, however, as we have seen, solves nothing, but, on the contrary, has merely encouraged Dr. Inge to declare roundly, from time to time, that opposites are not opposites, that miracles both are and are not miracles, that sentimentalism cannot be and is an instrument of sound moral progress, that institutionalism is necessary and fatal to true religion, and much else to like effect, suggesting only that he himself is at sea in a fog.

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* Readers may be referred to my essay on Butler, in *Christianity and Naturalism.*

And this is the inevitable consequence of Dr. Inge's spiritual monism, because by its very nature it necessitates belief in the final resolution and absorption of all things into the Absolute One, and so undermines all our discriminations and distinctions, leaving us at the last wholly dissolved in some unimaginable conflation which might as well be, for all anybody can honestly see in it, a state of pure nothingness. How else, indeed, save as the sheer dissolution of that which we call life, can one understand or describe that mingling of everything with everything, that passing of all things into all things else, so that everything includes and *is* everything else, while yet remaining distinct, though without differentiation – how else can we regard that incomprehensible conflation adumbrated by Plotinus in the passage from his fifth *Ennead* which I have quoted above? And nothing else than this accounts for the extraordinary fluidity of thought which underlies the superficial hardness and downrightness of Dr. Inge's books – a fluidity so pervasive and dissolving that he who at first sight appears to be perhaps the most incisive writer of our generation finally seems to be, in proportion as he is really studied, one of the most confused thinkers of any generation.

Yet this conclusion, though unhappily necessary, is far from the whole truth about Dr. Inge, and would merit severe condemnation were it allowed to stand unqualified. Some men are better than their philosophies, faithful to a light which is the crown of our humanity, even when that light is obscured by mists arising from the pride of intellect or by the cloudy vapourings of an untoward time. Dr. Inge has not given the world an acceptable reconstruction, or reinterpretation, of Christian belief, or anything like it. He stands, in some of his writings, for a slightly institutionalized form of Quakerism;* in other books, for a spiritual philosophy formed largely out of Plotinus, proposed as something better than religion, and completely divorced from institutionalism, ritualism, and sacramentalism. There is not much danger, I should think, that many, knowing where they are going, will be converted.

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* *Vale* contains an admission of this, in an amusing passage. "My friend Rashdall," Dr. Inge writes, "who, though no pragmatist, was associated with this group, was impelled by his combative disposition always to seize a poker by the hot end, and in consequence had a reputation for heresy which he certainly did not deserve. He thought it very hard that a Platonist may steal a horse when an Aristotelian may not look in at the stable window, and when he was asked whether he approved of my appointment as Dean, he replied, 'Why not? Inge is a Buddhist.' Bernard Shaw was nearer the mark when he called me a Quaker."

Nevertheless, Dr. Inge is unquestionably right in feeling, as an ever larger number of others during the last seventy-five years have felt, that a reconstruction of Christianity and a new formulation, in terms of modern conditions, of its practical implications are imperative necessities. He has been courageous, straightforward, and persistent in stating certain essential factors in the situation, and has thus performed a service valuable in itself, and especially valuable from one in his position. He has, moreover, done something of which there was the greatest need in exposing and condemning certain "modernists" such as M. Loisy and Tyrrell, and also certain groups who have sought to make Christianity the servant of some political movement. He has rightly insisted, early and late, that those social problems which deeply concern so many well-meaning people in our day cannot be regarded by the Christian as problems of the first importance or of the most serious kind, because Christianity is a divine life which, in so far as it may be attained, transforms a man's whole scale of values. It causes a man to think most, not of being comfortable, not of getting some of his neighbour's goods, not of worldly needs and advantages, but of being honest, of bearing witness to the truth whatever it may cost, of setting a curb upon his impulses, of not profiting by his neighbour's weakness. It teaches that success is not measured by what a man can get, but by what he can become, and that no character can be perfected without trial, without suffering, without one's learning finally that it is better to be the victim of injustice than to be guilty of it. "It is not our environment but our own reaction upon it which makes us blessed or unblest." This Dr. Inge has well understood and reiterated, insisting that whatever else Christianity may be, it has been and must be a belief in the full reality of the eternal spiritual world, and in the possibility of our reaching it, our true home, the goal of all our troubled striving. And this is a great matter, and the man who has made it his work to be faithful to the central truth of our probationary life on earth deserves well of us, even though he has not fulfilled all hopes which he once aroused. How many, indeed, do that? And Dr. Inge knows, more truly than can most of us, that he has been engaged upon a task which, at the best, can never be completed, though it will not, I think, ever be abandoned.

REVIEWS

The Innocent at Home*

If Mr. Raymond Moley's weekly, *Today*, is an unofficial organ of the Roosevelt Administration, then Mr. Sherwood Anderson, who is a regular literary contributor to *Today*, might well be considered the unofficial Poet Laureate of the New Deal. Unofficial is the right word. It is impossible to imagine Mr. Anderson as doing anything whatever of an official nature. He does not officially edit the Virginia newspapers that he is supposed to edit – I understand that his son does the editing. He is not officially a novelist or a poet; he disclaims anything so ambitious, and sets up as a "word fellow" or "a writer of tales". It is his fancy to go through the world in perpetual incognito, always, like Socrates, humbly professing his ignorance, and always reiterating, softly but insistently, his formidable "I want to know *why*". This is not an affectation, but a poetic mask or character, which permits a great deal of deadly critical work. For quite other purposes, Mark Twain assumed the character of the Innocent Abroad. Sherwood Anderson is the Innocent at Home.

And of course he needed no official appointment. There was bound to be a natural affinity between Mr. Anderson and the New Dealers. The hearts of the New Dealers began to bleed for the Forgotten Man, a little belatedly, about 1933. But Mr. Anderson's heart was bleeding long before that—at least as far back as *Winesburg, Ohio.* If poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world, Mr. Anderson may have helped cause the New Deal. He has been "watching people suffer" in a nobler sense, I think, than Alexander King's too malicious cartoon (now probably forgotten) once encouraged the Younger Generation to believe. When Mr. Anderson says, in his queer indirect way, that his heart bleeds, you are inclined to believe him, as you may not believe Sister Perkins, or Brother Tugwell or Brother Farley. He evidently interprets the New Deal to mean that neither he nor anybody else need continue merely to watch people suffer. Something may be done about it. He accepts the humanitarian professions and arrangements of the New Deal (especially the TVA, the CCC, etc.) at face value.

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* PUZZLED AMERICA *by Sherwood Anderson* (SCRIBNER'S, 287 pp. $2.50).

It is to the credit of the New Dealers that they have attracted Mr. Anderson's support. (They might well have remembered to attract a few more literary men, if they could!) It will be greatly to their discredit, and much the worse for them, if they disappoint him. I should not be very comfortable to have Mr. Anderson asking his soft questions and practising his incognito on the wrong side of the fence from me.

Puzzled America is a group of sketches, a characteristic Andersonian report on what the folks are thinking in the South and Middle West. He goes among miners, planters, boys of the CCC camps, tobacco farmers. He turns up at union meetings in East Tennessee or at a beer hall on the edge of a Middle-Western city. He finds out what Olson of

Minnesota is up to, or how young Senator Rush Holt of West Virginia got elected. Always he is asking questions and doing a great deal of listening. But it is Sherwood Anderson, very largely, who acts the part of the puzzled American. The people who answer his questions are often less puzzled than he is. For instance, there is the woman land-owner in the South to whom a query is put:

> "If you cut down your cotton acreage," I said to her, "what is to become of the little tenant farmers—those thrown off your land?"
> "I will take care of mine," she said.

Although Mr. Anderson never for one moment lets go of the major puzzle (for which he never offers a solution) of why there should be such vast material wealth in America and such widespread poverty, he also never fails to interpret the temper of the sections he visits as on the whole buoyant and eager. "There is a willingness to believe, a hunger for belief, a determination to believe," he writes in his introduction.

He finds—quite contrary to more "professional" reports—little sign of a Fascist spirit: "The Fascisti thing is not yet in the mind of the average American. We are still at heart a democracy." There is no real revolutionary feeling—at least "not yet". People tend to blame themselves for their disasters. "In America every man who is broke, down on his luck, is half ashamed of the fact." Like the ex-wheat-farmer whom Mr. Anderson interviews, he is likely to go off on a long explanation. He will say, "It's my own fault. I was not smart enough." And there is practically no class antagonism, it would seem, for Communists to utilize. America is not Europe, and most Americans are ready, in one way or another, to believe with Senator Long (who is not mentioned in this book) that every man is a king.

All this is told in the Sherwood Anderson way; it is quite sentimental, and it is quite realistic, too. The people talk like characters in a Sherwood Anderson story. The Southern coal miner and the South Dakota farmer speak with exactly the same accent; it is Sherwood Anderson's accent. In one sense, therefore, the book is not very good reporting. At least one sketch, "Night in a Corn Town", is almost pure story – and good story. There are a few rather crude generalizations that show Mr. Anderson's ignorance as real and not assumed in certain matters. For example, he wants to put the whole blame for soil erosion in the South on the reckless aristocrats, forgetting, or not knowing, that bad farming has long been a vice of little fellows as well as big ones.

Nevertheless, *Puzzled America*, with all its mistiness of feeling and over-simplification, is a far better book than most reports of the kind that have recently been published. Though less sharply etched, it is better, for instance, than Mr. Edmund Wilson's *The American Jitters*. It is better, I imagine, because Mr. Anderson has not, like Mr. Wilson, entirely renounced poetry for doctrine. He does not have to pick details to fit the Marxian notion of what America ought to look like. Mr. Anderson is simply an American, under no obligation to discover a proletariat, but very poetically sensitive to the human condition of Americans like himself. My feeling is that he is right in reporting Americans as still hopeful, vigorous, non-Fascist, non-

Communist (though here and there a little "radical"), and still ready to choose a leader in democratic fashion, to follow him if he performs like a leader, and to despise him for a weakling if he does not so perform.

Of course he might well have said much more than that. But even then, it would not be what you read in a newspaper.

DONALD DAVIDSON

An Aesthetic Humanist*

CONSIDERING that this age is – as we are assured over and over again by the blind guides of "science" who have misled humanity for the past century and a half at least – an age of mechanical progress that will lead humanity to the Pisgah-height of the communal factory and the communal farm (which will of course resemble the factory as nearly as possible), it may seem strange that philosophy should be concerning itself in these days more and more with the aesthetic problem. For aesthetics is certainly not a science, and if it may be called a philosophy it is only such because every philosopher who has ever tackled the question, "From what source may the quality we call beauty be derived – from feeling or from judgement? from frenzy or from calm? from form or from substance? from will or from reason? from without or from within? – has given us a different answer, derived we suspect from some predisposition of his own, till the mind becomes so confused that one is almost prepared to welcome the effort of the philosopher Croce who,

* CONCERNING BEAUTY *by Frank Jewett Mather Jr.* (PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS. 316 pp. $3.00).

some years ago, took every existing system of aesthetics, demolished them all, and fell back in the end on "intuition" – without defining intuition.

Professor Frank Jewett Mather is not, however, in the official sense, a philosopher. He is simply a scholar-thinker who has spent a lifetime examining and teaching art – and that not from the abstract ontological point of view but from the relativistic, provisional, psychological point of view. And now, at the close of his fruitful career, he gives us a book which really does cast a light on the debatable question of where beauty exists.

Most people who talk glibly about art assume that art can exist without the artifex, the maker. Not so Professor Mather. To him beauty is an activity or functioning of some man or group of men. And moreover it is not an absolute, but a variable, existing only in opinion, and beautiful only when and so long as it evokes an experience of beauty in somebody. Beauty, in short, is a quality of human experience, and not of any object. But having thus safely lodged art in human instinct and response, Professor Mather is brought face to face with the first and by far the longest controversy in the history of art-criticism, between Plato who lodged the impulse towards beauty in a frenzy of emotion so great that he thought all the poets ought to be banished from his ideal republic, and Aristotle who lodged it just as clearly in reason and in judgement, by arguing that art is a free imitation of nature and limited by probability.

Professor Mather does not attempt to adjudicate between these two famous disputants, echoes of whose quarrel were heard as recently as the Humanist debate of a few years gone by. He points out shrewdly, however, that Aristotle's famous theory of tragedy, that tragic art acts as a catharsis upon our emotions of pity and terror by ridding us of them, implies that the emotions of pity and terror must have been present in the artist's mind at any rate, before Aristotle could find them in the work. He might perhaps have gone further to point out that, to the artifex himself, those emotions are fully shared as any others, and form a part — perhaps two-thirds — of his own experience; but Professor Mather avoids dangerous subjectivity and continues to discuss the issue sanely and objectively. As he admirably says:

> Generally speaking, when the best men of letters who have written about beauty have regarded it as a sort of feeling, while almost all the articulate artists have regarded it as a kind of understanding and judgement, the sensible layman must conclude that neither group can be wholly right or wholly wrong. Both views must contain much truth, neither can contain it all. It is not thinkable that the finest critics and philosophers humanity has produced can be so completely deceived in regard to their own experience of beauty, nor is it to be admitted that almost without exception the artists who have been self-conscious enough to study their creative processes, have given us an entirely false report of them. . . . Now if we examine these contrasting views more narrowly, we shall see that nobody denies that into the experience of beauty, whether creative or receptive, both head and heart enter. The issue is simply that of the order of entrance — is an emotion the starting point or merely some especially modulated perception? Here we should not fail to note that the issue is perhaps clouded by an obsolete and ill-defined terminology. The old triad — feel-

ing, thinking, willing – may still have its convenience, but it has not withstood the analysis of the new psychology. We do not just feel, think, or will separately, in a void. We cannot will anything which we have not first felt to be desirable, nor can we attain our desire without taking thought. Apart from mere emotional explosions, which have little to do with aesthetic experience, to assert the desirability of anything involves in itself an act of judgement. Fancy is perhaps bred in the heart but it is nourished from the head. Similarly it is difficult to imagine any understanding without a prior will to understand. So if we base beauty on feeling, we mean a feeling energized by will and expressed largely through judgement, while if we base beauty on thinking, on an act of judgement, we mean a thought that to achieve expression must promptly enlist the will and thus acquire a tinge of feeling.

This solution of the old classic-romantic controversy in favour of a classicized romanticism akin to the classical romanticism of Goethe (Professor Mather quotes with approval several times Goethe's maxim "*Geneissen ist nachschaffen*", which implies that there is an element of subjective creativity present even in the most coldly objective critical judgement) will, presumably, please neither the Classicists nor the Romantics on their historic battlefield. But nevertheless it is as near the truth as anyone who is not primarily creative himself, is ever likely to come.

As regards the more recent stages of this battle, the stage represented by Schopenhauer who said that beauty was both selfless and will-less, freeing us from the will-to-live, evoking the retort of Nietzsche that on the contrary beauty was ecstatic and Dionysian, the highest statement possible of the will-to-live, Professor Mather points out first of all that "all genuine aesthetic experience draws heavily upon judgement and will", and, second, upsets Nietzsche neatly by calmly observing that "his Dionysian beauty is merely a highly dynamized modulation of Apollonian beauty. Of beauty there are infinite modulations, but not two beauties".

The position therefore taken up by Professor Mather is the true humanist one – Professor Mather may justly say "*homo sum: nihil humanum a me alienum puto*". His observations, whether on Thomas Aquinas, on Chinese landscape art, on modern prose and James Joyce, are those of a past master of culture in the Goethean sense. His theory of the correspondences of rhythm, which I lack space to discuss here, is infinitely suggestive and profound. It betrays a creative insight which is uncanny. This is a book to buy, to borrow, to think about, to read and to reread. It is the best account of the "aesthetic transaction" I know, and like the work of a great practitioner of that transaction, the prince of the romantics, Delacroix, its genius consists in being "reasonable in a superior fashion".

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

Philosophy at Columbia*

THE thirteen essays that constitute this volume, coming to us from the *academia* of Columbia University, may be taken as indicating in a general way the direction in which the philosophical winds are blowing. But the wealth of matter contributed by the various essayists renders it difficult, if not impossible, to treat the contents adequately in a review.

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* STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF IDEAS *edited by the Department of Philosophy of Columbia University*. Vol. III. (COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS. 511 pp. $4.25).

The opening essay, which is from the pen of Professor Dewey, deals with three historic conceptions of "experience". There is, first, the classical conception formulated by the Greek philosophers, especially by Plato and Aristotle. Then there is the conception which in the history of philosophy is held to be characteristic of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Finally there is the modern movement which, we are told, is still in process of development. Of this latest conception of experience, with its development of a psychology having a biological basis, the essayist says, in reference to the current concept of sensation, that "we are getting much nearer Aristotle's psychology on this particular point in the approach to the problem".

In his study of the classical empiricism John Dewey follows the lines indicated in his *Experience and Nature*, published ten years ago, but in this present essay he has nothing to say of the epistemology of the scholastics as such, contenting himself with the remark that the classical tradition of empiricism persisted well into the seventeenth century. As in the earlier work, he insists on the classical distinction between the practical and the theoretical, although formulating his view in somewhat different language.

Classical philosophy, he tells us, identified experience with the beliefs and skills that were due to custom and to consolidated memory, and regarded it as in consequence inevitably enslaved in the past. Over against experience there was, in the thought of both Plato and Aristotle, science, understanding, or comprehension, which depend on reason. It is this contrast which defines reason, he asserts, for it eventually gives us forms entirely freed from matter and thus leads us to the *intellectus purus* of the scholastics and of the thinkers of the early modern period. "The chief way in which Aristotle modified the Platonic concept of experience is in formulating this graded emerging of rational understanding out of experience."

But Aristotle, he thinks, made a sharper distinction between theory and practice than Plato had done. Thus, the *Republic* is Plato's attempt, we are told, to sketch ideally the conditions under which politics and morals might become truly rational. Then he goes on to tell us of the Stagirite:

> Aristotle had no such ambition. He was perfectly willing, I won't say to throw morals and politics to the dogs, but he was willing to leave them to probability and opinion, to a certain amount of guesswork, especially to the intuition of the shrewd expert. Rational or scientific control is reserved for purely theoretical and intellectual matters.

The logical inference to be drawn from this excerpt is that in Aristotle's view there is no such thing as a science of morals or politics, that right conduct on the part of the individual either in his private life or in his intercourse with his fellow men is somehow a matter of felicitous and lucky guesswork, and that morality does not necessarily involve the application of reason to human behaviour or the determination by means of reason of the right rule of living.

What the two Greek philosophers really wrote on this subject he who runs may read. Plato sought to establish ethics on a basis of mathematical exactitude and to formulate an ideal of an absolute Good, definable in rigidly scientific terms. Aristotle, in his earlier works, was content to follow the same line, envisaging ethics as the gift of a wisdom in immediate contact with the eternal and absolute norms of righteousness. But when he had shaken off the trammels of discipleship and had achieved his own philosophical manhood he broke away from the Platonic notion of a moral law laid up in heaven and accessible to a "pure reason" exercised independently of practical experience.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, a work which has woven itself into the texture of Western civilization and whose threads run through all the varying patterns of our modern ethical thought, he described ethics as an empirical and practical science. Its subject-matter he indicated as the activities "that befit our human estate". The function of reason as applied to this subject-matter is to review the instincts, interests, and capacities of human beings and to discover the purely natural sanctions for a moral order. In the first book of the *Ethics* he laid down the principle that governed his whole inquiry, namely that the Good is expressive of the particular nature and needs of the human organism. In the tenth book there is a passage wherein he warns the statesman and the moralist alike to keep their ears to the ground rather than to raise their eyes to the sky.

Aristotle's guiding thought was that there is a right way in the art of living. Far from leaving the search for such a moral technique to probability, to opinion, to mere guesswork or to "the intuition of the shrewd expert", he appends to his definition of virtue, in the famous sixth chapter of the first book of the *Ethics*, a clause which throws a veritable searchlight on his whole theory of morals. Telling us that virtue is a state of character concerned with choice, he goes on to say that the right choice "is determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it". He is at pains to make us understand what practical wisdom implies. He expressly restricts it to "that form of wisdom which is concerned with a man himself as an individual and with what the good life is for the individual".

Now, Aristotle was quite aware of the fact that the concrete difficulties of life cannot be solved by theories and that no ethical system can construct a human robot which will always act in the concrete according to a definite formula. Consequently, in making ethics an empirical science, he ruled out intuitive reasoning, mathematical demonstration, and philosophic insight, since these things do not even pretend, he says, to study the means to happiness, to that well-being that arises from the balanced and harmonious realization of the entire complex structure of our human nature. Only in one special sense would he allow to practical reason an intuitive character. A man of sound judgement and ripe understanding will intuitively perceive, he says, the moral significance of a given situation without going through a process of arguing the problem out with himself. But for the vast majority of men, virtue is an affair of choices that have to be made in concrete situations, and such choices are right or wrong in so far as they are, within certain limits, under the control and guidance of reason.

The rest of the book under review must necessarily be treated briefly. There is a closely-reasoned essay by Richard McKeon on *Renaissance and Method in Philosophy* wherein the writer examines the viewpoints of Abelard, Erasmus, and Luther along the lines of the mediaeval concepts of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. Descartes appears in two essays, one by Albert G. A. Balz on the Cartesian doctrine and the animal soul, the other by Sterling P. Lamprecht on the rôle of Descartes in seventeenth-century England. This latter Cartesian study is delightfully written and is to be noted for its insistence on the influence (not always understood or acknowledged in the England of today) which the French thinker exercised upon the mind of John Locke. The *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is the subject of a short monograph by Frederick J. E. Woodbridge in which the writer indicates the difficulties which Locke faced in his theory of experience. Incidentally he fails to suggest any reasonable means by which the English thinker might have solved them. "Given Locke's theory of nature which was Newton's system, it may be said that his theory of experience had to be pretty much what it was."

The longest essay in the book is that on Marx and Hegel, where Sidney Hook attacks the problem as to "how there developed from what was ostensibly the most conservative system of philosophy in the Western-European tradition the revolutionary ideology of the greatest mass movement since Christianity". What he seeks to discover is, not the merely historical sequence nor the psychological bond between the two men, but the logical connection between the Hegelian idealism and the Marxist revolution. The essay falls into three definite parts, in the first of which the writer sketches the contrasts of Hegel and Marx, in the second the continuity that bound them together, and in the third the manner in which the Hegelian dialectic, freed from its mystical form, took its place and its importance in Marx's methodology. The essayist tells us that one *nexus* between Hegel and Marx is the belief that the specific criteria of correct thinking must vary with a developing subject-matter. "Both deny that standards are given once and for all time. They are to be tested by the subject-matter to which they are applied."

This striking sentence brings us sharply up against the contrast between the old and the new, between the realism of the Aristotelian evaluation of nature and of experience and the idealism of these latter days. Aristotle saw moral standards as fixed norms of conduct, because human nature was, for him, within certain limits a fixed and normal thing. His ethical system dealt explicitly with the fact that men are often weak and fallible and, as such, are likely to fail in a moral crisis. For that reason he propounded his ethical doctrine "roughly and in outline". But behind all the possible individual futilities and weaknesses, he saw human nature as a constant, with definite instincts, appetites, and capacities. It was in harmony with those invariables that he constructed his philosophy of politics and morals.

Modern idealism, in its Marxist form, regards human nature as a variable. "By acting on the external world and changing it," says Marx, "man changes his own nature." Thus, human nature is no longer definable in terms of fixed desires, instincts, capacities. It has become a variable, for which no fixed ethical standards are really possible. This is our heritage from idealism. This is the price we pay for turning our backs on the teaching of him whom Dante called the thinker's philosopher: *il maestro di color chi sanno.*

CHAS. F. RONAYNE

The Irrepressible Conflict*

THE EVE OF CONFLICT, as the sub-title suggests, concerns itself with the decade immediately preceding the Civil War. It proposes, among other things, to decide "whether or not it was inevitable that the sword decide the dispute between the sections and to assess certain responsibilities for the decision. . . ." We are then informed of the author's conclusion, which is that the war need not have been fought, "at that time at least"; that those who tried to keep the peace were patriots and statesmen (the inference being that their antagonists were traitors and demagogues); and that Stephen A. Douglas's name as a patriot and statesman, like Abou Ben Adhem's, led all the rest. "Great in friendship, great in mind, great in purpose, his was the greatest effort to make intelligence the arbiter of American affairs." The scenario of a historical drama is thus set. On the one side is

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* THE EVE OF CONFLICT: Stephen A. Douglas and the Needless War *by George Fort Milton* (HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN. 508 pp. $5.00).

Intelligence, captained by Douglas; on the other, Emotion, played by the representatives of the "inflamed minorities" who were finally to thwart the cause of Intelligence and bring a "war of brothers and a peace of desolation and despair".

The thought at once occurs that for the victorious brothers the peace was anything but a peace of desolation and despair. Such a reflection, however, is beyond the immediate subject matter of the book, which gives the promise of a conflict somewhat after the manner of a mediaeval morality. This promise, in a sense, is fulfilled but unfortunately not with that clarity concerning the ultimate issue with which feudal polity was endowed. *The Eve of Conflict* suffers from a formal difficulty: a thesis advanced in misleading terms along with a straightforward chronicle of the life and times of Douglas. The chronicle, in so far as it stays clear of the thesis, is direct, full, and valuable. It is the most complete narrative of Douglas's life that we have. It is fullest in the political and land-speculation phases; and rightly so, for upon such things most of Douglas's life was spent. Ordinarily Douglas, the man, would have been of no more importance than John Doe, the man; but Mr. Milton so handles his protagonist as to discover for his reader the peculiar nature of the desires and ambitions of society in the Northwest. This has been nowhere done in such clear detail. Upon such a groundwork the importance of Douglas, the politician, appears in its right relation to the history of the fifties. Through extensive research, especially in the use of a great quantity of unpublished Douglas letters, certain errors and half-truths have been corrected. Such errors are usually the result of inadequate information. Aside from the general re-interpretation of certain bodies of opinion coming from a more enlarged knowledge of the man's career, there is a special revision in relation to the compromise of 1850: Douglas becomes its chief author and mover through Congress. Clay must henceforth assume a more modest position. Already, according to Milton, he belonged to the dead. It was his name as the Old Compromiser, not the actual statesman, which was the important thing.

This leads to the principal point of disagreement with Mr. Milton. He asserts that the concepts and gods of the Founding Fathers were no more; and that the demigods, Henry Clay, John Randolph, Andrew Jackson, Daniel Webster, and Calhoun, who succeeded them, had had their day. Just what he considers their day to have been is not clear, except that it was only remotely connected with the day of Douglas and the "inflamed minorities". These assumptions give rise to several questions. Which gods are no more? Which concepts have been increasingly neglected? Those of Hamilton and Marshall, or those of Jefferson and Du Pont? And certainly it is confusing to the reader to dismiss Jackson, Webster, Clay, and Calhoun in the same breath. The breath which accompanies this dismissal is a deep one: "The world had marched forward (it no longer turned on its old axis), America had almost completed transforming a Confederacy of States into a puissant nation, and two of her three sections had come so to regard it." In other words, that other section was to be considered an obstructionist; the dog in the manger who barked and growled when the puissant mule tried to get at his industrial hay.

Without bringing up the question of whether the Industrial Revolution had marched the world forward, a question about which there seems some present doubt, to say that America had transformed anything is begging an historical question, and the very question which it is the announced purpose of this book to solve. Without definition the word America is meaningless. It has even less meaning than the word Union; and the meaning of the political Union would not be final until the South could be brought by argument or force to accept the rule of an allied East and Northwest, or to establish its independence. That was the issue of the fifties, just as the issue of 1800-1815 had been the enforcement of the Virginia Dynasty's rule upon New England.

It is perfectly plausible to argue that the Confederacy of States was no more, but to imply that the Hamilton-John Marshall form of nation was predestined, because of the march of the world, to give the Union its polity, is to misinterpret the conflict which had been the paramount political issue since the close of the War of 1812. And this was the sectional struggle for power, carried on by means of the states. When the interest in power, whether agricultural or financial, governed for a selfish end, the minority and exploited regions found themselves reverting to those constitutional arguments which might free them from servility; and the surest of arguments was the sovereignty of the states. But throughout the forties and fifties Southern "ultras", co-operationists, and moderates never lost sight of the end of their arguments. Their disagreement was strategic. As early as 1821 the elder Rhett was willing to withdraw under the name of revolution; Calhoun, while constitutionally proving the inviolability of the state's sovereignty, was actually manoeuvering to keep the Union functioning through the South's control of the Democratic Party, not to mention nullification and the two-executive proposal.

The hope of a just union has always been and still is the protection for the minority section or sections. There is no greater peril to stable institutions than a "puissant nation" when the purpose and direction of this puissance is disguised or misunderstood. As John Taylor of Caroline, the surest constitutional authority, warned, such power will be found to be in the hidden control of some selfish interest inimical to the general good. This belief in the vague and metaphysical power of a changing world has caused the author to ignore the parts composing his powerful nation, and hence to misinterpret the rôles of the moderates and ultras. The world may change, but it is changed by men acting in their social, economic, and political capacities. It may be to the interest of certain schools of political economy, the laissez-faire, for example, to pretend that their special principles are inevitable, are Manifest Destiny. The Stuarts availed themselves of such an idea in the Divine Right of Kings. All rulers must establish some such myth. The planting aristocracy was determined to make itself responsible for the South; this intention was consciously put in the pro-slavery arguments, a manifesto discarding openly the democracy of Jefferson and Jackson. Even Douglas, spokesman for his section, used terms proper to his section, for it had been from the beginning to the interest of the West to trade or compromise.

Therefore, when the author comes to his assessment of the responsibilities for the needless war, the assessment is not very convincing. The blame goes to those extreme minorities for "manipulating" the machinery of parties and thereby "seizing" the tools of government and in this way committing for their own mad ends the sections to a brothers' war. But is it not the function of politicians to manipulate and seize? Indeed, as Mr. Milton shows so well, this is just what Douglas had been doing since his political infancy. Because at a crucial moment he and his supporters were out-manipulated, are we to believe that this marks the defeat of Intelligence by Emotion? Douglas, for his own reasons, might have held some such belief. It is perfectly good strategy for the defeated party to infer that their victorious opponents are upstarts and unfit to rule; it is even permissible for the historian to come to this conclusion, but not because of the condition of the world or unrelated abstractions. Isn't the reason to be found in a more predictable set of circumstances?

The Democratic Party had, with certain upsets, ruled the country since Jackson's time by sectional compromises. These truces did not do away with the basic conflict of interests and social systems: they were mere agreements to live together by mutual concessions. The time came when those who believed in a separate destiny for the South lost faith in the virtue of compromise. The antagonistic economy of the East and its growing population cautioned the secessionists that the sooner they got out, the safer would this action make their society and its peculiar institutions. In the meantime the abolitionist sentiment had spread throughout the East and Northeast from its small beginning in fanaticism until it was a powerful, active political force, also unwilling to compromise. It was not absolutely necessary that war come out of these opposed states of mind; and yet it did. Douglas supported his section, which followed the leadership of an "inflamed minority", and by his action showed the real forces which must settle the issue. Abstract intelligence had lost its captain, perhaps; but since the confines of this realm lay neither below nor above the Ohio, there was no one to censure him for his defection.

In the abstract this particular war may have been needless, but so are all the ills that beset man in society. Therefore, when different social systems are in conflict, it is a futile business to assess responsibility without a comparison of the natures of these systems; and even then, no matter how right or how wrong-sighted the chief participants may seem, they cannot be judged in the light of their opponents' system.

Douglas honourably tried to avert the war, but this does not convince us that the particular union of East and Northwest was destined to impose the final and best form of rule over the whole body politic; nor that Douglas represented a mystical Democracy whose interests were in some way apart from the regional interests. Nineteenth-century plutocracy has many metaphysical vagaries through which it attempts to escape the responsibilities of power: the mystical Democracy is one. It is to be doubted, however, that the final judgement of historical opinion will be based upon the special pleading of this plutocracy in its efforts to justify its actions.

ANDREW NELSON LYTLE